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A Quarterly of New Literature

ACCENT

JOHN HAWKES: The Horse in a London Flat

JOHN FREDERICK NIMS: The Ivy and the Rune

GLAUCO CAMBON: Dea Roma and Robert Lowell

HERBERT A. PERLUCK:
An Unromantic Reading of 'The Bear'

CHARLES B. TINKHAM

CAROLYN STOLOFF

ARMAND SCHWERNER

NORMA FARBER

OLIVER RICE

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40 CENTS

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EDITORIAL STAFF: Kerker Quinn, Charles Shattuck, George Scouffas, Daniel Curley, Roberta Scouffas, Stanley Elkin, James Ballowe, Herbert Bogart, Rocco Fumento. Secretarial assistants: Wanda Revell, Nina Logan.

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CONTRIBUTORS

GLAUCO CAMBON is an Italian writer, now teaching at the University of Michigan.

NORMA FARBER lives in Brookline, Mass. About sixty of her poems appeared in Scribner's *Poets of Today, II.*

JOHN HAWKES, of the English Department at Brown University, is the author of such anti-realistic novels as *The Cannibal, The Beetle Leg,* and the forthcoming *The Lime Tree.*

JOHN FREDERICK NIMS is spending a second year in Spain. His translations of St. John of the Cross were published last year, and a new collection of his work will appear in 1960.

HERBERT A. PERLUCK, of Ashaway, R. I., is at work on a critical book on "Naturalism come of age." He has taught at Brown University and Connecticut College for Women.

OLIVER RICE'S poems have appeared in *Sewanee Review.* He teaches English at the University of Maryland.

DOROTHY ROBERTS of State College, Pennsylvania, has contributed poems to *Hudson Review* and other magazines.

ARMAND SCHWERNER of New York is poetry editor of *Quixote.*

CAROLYN STOLOFF is an instructor of painting at Manhattanville College, and her work has been exhibited in many shows in the East and in California. *Antioch Review, Phoenix,* and *Audience* have printed her poems.

CHARLES B. TINKHAM lives in Hammond, Indiana.

ACCENT FOR 1959

WINTER 1959—'The Poetry of Edwin Muir' by Ralph J. Mills, Jr.; 'Guido Gezelle' and translations of seven Gezelle poems by Oscar Mandel; an interview with Wright Morris by Sam Bluefarb; a story by Jack Matthews; poems by R. G. Vliet, Richard Emil Braun, Anne Sexton, and Sue Abbott Boyd.

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SUMMER 1959—'Felix Krull as Fairy Tale Hero' by Don W. Kleine; 'Stephen Crane's "The Monster",' by James Hafley; stories by William Kelley, Jr., and Robert Musil; 'The First Book on Brecht' by Charles Shattuck; poems by John Berry, Rainer Brambach, Hyam Plutzik, Frederick Bock, and Felix Anselm.

AUTUMN 1959—'Pater and Proust' by Joseph E. Baker; 'Requiem,' a long poem by A. R. Ammons; 'Kazantzakis' by George Scouffas; stories by Stanley Elkin and P. H. Lowrey; poems by Laurence Donovan, Edwin Fussell, John Berry, Patricia Goedicke, and Arnold Fishman.

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JOHN HAWKES:

The Horse in a London Flat

It is Wednesday dawn. Margaret's day, once every fortnight, for marketing and looking in the shop windows. She is off already with mints in her pocket and a great empty crocheted bag on her arm, jacket pulled down nicely on her hips and a fresh tape on her injured finger. She smells of rose water and the dust that is always gathering in their four rooms. In one of the shops she will hold a plain dress against the length of her body, then return it to the racks; at a stand near the bridge she will buy himself—Michael Banks—a tin of fifty, and for Hencher she will buy three cigars. She will ride the double-decker, look at dolls behind a glass, have a sandwich. And come home at last with a packet of cold fish in the bag.

Most Wednesdays—let her stay, let her walk out—he does not care, does not hold his breath, never listens for the soft voice that calls goodbye. But this is no usual Wednesday dawn and he slips from room to room until she is finally gone. In front of the glass he fixes his coat and hat, and smiles. For he intends not to be home when she returns.

Now he is standing next to their bed—the bed of ordinary down and ticking and body scent, with the course of dreams mapped on the coverlet—and not beside the door and not in the hall. Ready for

street, departure, for some prearranged activity, he nonetheless is immobile this moment and stares at the bed. His gold tooth is warm in the sun, his rotting tooth begins to pain. From out the window the darting of a tiny bird makes him wish for its sound. He would like to hear it or would like to hear sounds of a wireless through the open door or sounds of tugs and double-deckers and boys crying the news. Perhaps the smashing of a piece of furniture. Anything. Because he too has his day to discover and it is more than pretty dresses and gandering at a shiny steam iron and taking a quick cup of tea.

He can tell the world.

But in the silence of the flat's close and ordinary little bedroom he hears again all the soft timid sounds she made before setting off to market: the fall of the slippery soap bar into the empty tub, the limpid sound of her running bath, the slough of three fingers in the cream pot, the cry of bristles against her teeth, the fuzzy sound of straps drawing up on the skin of her shoulders; poor sounds of her counting out the change, click of the pocketbook. Then sounds of a safety pin closing beneath the lifted skirt and of the comb setting up last minute static in the single wave of her hair.

He pulls at the clothes closet door, steps inside and embraces two hanging and scratchy dresses and her winter coat pinned over with bits of tissue. Something on a hook knocks his hat awry. Behind him, in the room, the sunlight has burned past the chimes in St. George's belfry and is now more than a searching shaft in that room: it comes diffused and hot through the window glass, it lights the dry putty-colored walls and ceiling, draws a steam from the damp lath behind the plaster, warms the small unpainted tin clock which she always leaves secreted and ticking under the pillow on her side of the bed. A good early morning sun, good for the cat or for the humming housewife. But the cat is in the other room and his wife is out.

Inside the closet he is rummaging overhead to a shelf—reaching and pushing among the dresses now, invading anew and for himself this hiding place which he expects to keep from her. He stands on tiptoe, an arm is angular at the crook, his unused hand is dragging one of the dresses off the hanger by the shoulder, the other set of high fingers is pushing, working a way through the dusty folds toward what he knows is resting behind the duster and pail near the wall. His hipbone strikes the thin paneling of the door so that it squeaks and swings outward, casting a perfect black shadow across the foot of the bed. And after a moment he steps out into the room,

turns sideways, uncorks the bottle, tilts it up, and puts the hot mouth of the bottle to his lips. He drinks—until the queer mechanism of his throat can pass no more and his lips stop sucking and a little of it spills down his chin. Upstairs a breakfast kettle begins to shriek. He takes a step, holds the bottle against his breast, suddenly turns his face straight to the sun.

She'll wonder about me. She'll wonder where her hubby's at, rightly enough.

He left the flat door open. Throughout the day, whenever anyone moved inside the building, slammed a window or shouted a few words down the unlighted stair—"Why don't you leave off it? Why don't you just leave off it, you with your beastly kissing round the gas works?"—the open door swung a hand's length to and fro, drifted its desolate and careless small arc in a house of shadow and brief argument. But no one took notice of the door, no one entered the four empty rooms beyond it, and only the abandoned cat followed with its turning head each swing of the door. Until at the end of the day Margaret came in smiling, walked the length of the hall with a felt hat over one ear, feet hot, market sack pulling from the straps in her hand and, stopping short, discovered the waiting animal in the door's crack. Stopped, backed off, went for help from a second-floor neighbor who had a heart large with comfort and all the cheer in the world, went for help as he knew she would.

Knowing how much she feared his dreams: knowing that her own worst dream was one day to find him gone, overdue minute by minute some late afternoon until the inexplicable absence of him became a certainty; knowing that his own worst dream, and best, was of a horse which was itself the flesh of all violent dreams; knowing this dream, that the horse was in their sitting room—he had left the flat door open as if he meant to return in a moment or meant never to return—seeing the room empty except for moonlight bright as day and, in the middle of the floor, the tall upright shape of the horse draped from head to tail in an enormous sheet that falls over the eyes and hangs down stiffly from the silver jaw; knowing the horse on sight and listening while it raises one shadowed hoof on the end of a silver thread of foreleg and drives down the hoof to splinter in a single crash one plank of that empty Dreary Station floor; knowing his own impurity and Hencher's guile; and knowing that Margaret's hand has nothing in the palm but a short life-span

(finding one of her hair pins in his pocket that Wednesday dawn when he walked out into the sunlight with nothing cupped in the lip of his knowledge except thoughts of the night and pleasure he was about to find)—knowing all this, he heard in Hencher's first question the sound of a dirty wind, a secret thought, the sudden crashing in of the plank and the crashing shut of that door.

"How's the missus, Mr. Banks? Got off to her marketing all right?"

Then: "No offense. No offense," said Hencher after Banks' pause and answer.

The Artemis—a small excursion boat—shivered and rolled now and again ever so slightly though it was moored fast to the quay. Banks heard the cries of dock hands who were fixing a boom's hook to a cargo net, the sound of a pump, and the sound, from the top deck, of a child shouting through cupped hands in the direction of the river's distant traffic of puffing tugs and barges. And also overhead there were the quick uncontrollable running footfalls of smaller children and, on the gangway, hidden beyond the white bulkhead of the refreshment saloon, there was the steady tramp of still more boarding passengers.

A bar, a dance floor—everyone was dancing—a row of salt-sealed windows, a small skylight drawn over with the shadow of a fat gull; here was Hencher's fun, and Banks could feel the crowd mounting the sides of the ship, feel the dance rhythm tingling through the greasy wood of the table top beneath his hand. For a moment and in a clear space past the open sea doors held back by small brass hooks, he saw hatless members of the crew dragging a mountain of battered life preservers forward in a great tar-stained shroud of canvas.

"No offense, eh, Mr. Banks? Too good a day for that. And tell me now, how's this for a bit of a good trip?"

Hencher's hand was putty round the bottom of the beer glass, the black and cream-checkered cap was tight on his head, surely this fat man would sail away with the mothers and children and smart young girls when the whistle blew.

"No offense, Hencher. But you can leave off mentioning her, if you don't mind."

Perhaps he would sail away himself. That would be the laugh, he and Hencher, stowaways both, elbowing room at the ship's rail between lovers and old ladies, looking out themselves—the two of

them—for a glimpse of the water or a great furnace burning far-off at the river's edge. Sail away out of the river's mouth and into the afternoons of an excursion life. Hear the laughter, feel the ship's beam wallow in the deep seas and lie down at night beneath a lifeboat's white spongy prow still hot to the hand. No luggage, no destination, helmsman tying the wheel—on any course—to have a smoke with a girl. This would be the laugh, with only the pimply barkeep who had never been to sea before drawing beer the night long. But there was better than this in wait for him, something much better than this.

In the crowd at the foot of the gangplank an officer had asked for their tickets, and Hencher had spoken to the man: "My old woman's on that boat, Captain, and me and my friend here will just see that she's got a proper deck chair and a robe round her legs."

And now the dawn was gone, the morning hours too were gone. He had found the crabbed address and come upon the doorway in which Hencher waited; had walked with him down all those streets until the squat ship, unseaworthy, just for pleasure, lay ahead of them in a berth between two tankers; had already seen the rigging, the smokestacks, the flesh-colored masts and rusty sirens and whistles in a blue sky above the rotting roof of the cargo sheds; had boarded the Artemis that smelled of coke and rank canvas and sea animals and beer and boys looking for sport.

"We'll just have some drink and a little talk on this ship before she sails, Mr. Banks. . . ."

He leaned toward Hencher. His elbows were on the table and his wet glass was touching Hencher's frothy glass in the center of the table. Someone had dropped a mustard pot and beneath his shoe he felt the fragments of smashed china, the shape of a wooden spoon, the slick of the mustard on the dirty spoon. A woman with lunch packed in a box pushed through the crowd and bumped against him, paused and rested the box upon their table. Protruding from the top of the box and sealed with a string and paper was a tall jar filled with black bottled tea. The woman carried her own folding chair.

"Bloody slow in putting to sea, mates," she said, and laughed. She wore an old sweater, a man's muffler was knotted round her throat. "I could do with a breath of that sea air right now, I could."

Hencher lifted his glass. "Go on," he said, "have a sip. Been on the Artemis before?"

"Not me."

"I'll tell you, then. Find a place for yourself in the bows. You get the breeze there, you see everything best from there."

She put her mouth to the foam, drank long, and when she took the glass away she was breathing quickly and a canker at the edge of her lip was wet. "Join me," she said. "Why don't you join me, mates?"

"We'll see you in the bows," said Hencher.

"Really?"

"Good as my word."

It was all noise of people wanting a look at the world and a smell of the sea, and the woman was midships with her basket, soon in the shadow of the bow anchor she would be trying to find a safe spot for her folding chair. Hencher was winking. A boy in a black suit danced by their table, and in his arms was a girl of about fourteen. Banks watched the way she held him and watched her hands in the white gloves shrunk small and tight below the girl's thin wrists. Music, laughter, smells of deck paint and tide and mustard, sight of the boy pulled along by the fierce white childish hands, and he himself was listening, touching his tongue to the beer, leaning close as he dared to Hencher, beginning to think of the black water widening between the sides of the holiday ship and the quay.

"What's that, Hencher? What's that you say?"

Hencher was looking him full in the face: ". . . to Rock Castle, here's to Rock Castle, Mr. Banks!"

He heard his own voice beneath the whistles and plash of bilge coming out of a pipe: "To Rock Castle, then. . . ."

The glasses touched, were empty, and the girl's leg was only the leg of a child and the woman would drink her black tea alone. He stood, moved his chair so that he was not across from Hencher but beside him.

"He's old, Mr. Banks. Rock Castle has his age, he has. And what's his age? Why, it's the evolution of his bloody name, that's what it is. Just the evolution of a name—Apprentice out of Lithograph by Cobbler, Emperor's Hand by Apprentice out of Hand Maiden by Lord of the Land, Draftsman by Emperor's Hand out of Shallow Draft by Amulet, Castle Churl by Draftsman out of Likely Castle by Cold Masonry, Rock Castle by Castle Churl out of Words on Rock by Plebeian—and what's this name if not the very evolution of his life. You want to think of the life, Mr. Banks, think of the breeding. Consider the fiver bets, the cheers, the wreaths.

Then forgotten, because he's taken off the turf and turned out into the gorse, far from the paddock, the swirl of torn ticket stubs, the soothing nights after a good win, far from the serpentine eyes and bowler hats. Do you see it, Mr. Banks? Do you see how it was for Rock Castle?"

He could only nod, but once again—the Artemis was rolling—once again he saw the silver jaw, the enormous sheet, the upright body of the horse that was crashing in the floor of the Dreary Station flat. And he could only keep his eyes down, clasp his hands.

". . . back sways a little, you see, the color of the coat hardens and the legs grow stiff. Months, years, it's only the blue sky for him, occasionally put to stud and then back he goes to his shelter under an old oak at the edge of a field. Useless, you see. Do you see it? Until tonight when he's ours—yours—until tonight when we get our hands on him and tie him up in the van and drive him to stables I know of in Highland Green. Yours, you see, and he's got no recollection of the wreaths or seconds of speed, no knowledge at all of the prime younger horses sprung from his blood. But he'll run all right, on a long track he'll run better than the young ones good for nothing except a sprint. Power, endurance, a forgotten name—do you see it, Mr. Banks? He's ancient, Rock Castle is, an ancient horse and he's bloody well run beyond memory itself."

Flimsy frocks, dancing children, a boy with the face of a man, a girl whose body was still awkward; they were all about him and taking their pleasure while the feet tramped and the whistle tooted. But Hencher was talking, holding him by the brown coat just beneath the ribs, then fumbling and cupping in front of his eyes a tiny photograph and saying: "Go on, go on, take a gander at this lovely horse."

Then the pause, the voice less friendly and the question, and the sound of his own voice answering: "I'm game, Hencher. Naturally, I'm still game."

"Ah, like me you are. Good as your word. Well, come then, let's have a turn round the deck of this little tub. We've time yet for a turn at the rail."

He stood, trying to scrape the shards of the smashed mustard pot from his shoe, followed Hencher toward the white sea doors. The back of Hencher's neck was red, the checked cap was at an angle, they made their slow way together through the excursion crowd and the smells of soap and cotton underwear and scent behind the ears.

"We're going to do a polka," somebody called, "come dance with us."

"A bit of business first," Hencher said, and grinned over the heads at the woman. "A little business first—then we'll be the boys for you, never fear."

A broken bench with the name Annie carved into it, a bucket half-filled with sand, something made of brass and swinging, a discarded man's shirt snagged on the horn of a big cleat bolted to the deck and, overhead, high in a box on the wall of the pilot house, the running light flickering through the sea gloom. He felt the desertion, the wind, the coming of darkness as soon as he stepped from the saloon.

She's home now, she's thinking about her hubby now, she's asking the cat where's Michael off to, where's my Michael gone to?

He spat sharply over the rail, turned his jacket collar up, breathed on the dry bones of his hands.

Together, heads averted, going round the deck, coming abreast of the saloon and once more sheltered by a flapping canvas: Hencher lit a cigar while he himself stood grinning in through the lighted window at the crowd. He watched them kicking, twirling, holding hands, fitting their legs and feet to the steps of the dance; he grinned at the back of the girl too young to have a girdle to pull down, grinned at the boy in the black suit. He smelled the hot tobacco smell and Hencher was with him, Hencher who was fat and blowing smoke on the glass.

"You say you have a van, Hencher, a horse van?"

"That's the ticket. Two streets over from this quay, parked in an alley by the ship-fitter's, as good a van as you'd want and with a full tank. And it's a van won't be recognized, I can tell you that. A little oil and sand over the name, you see. Like they did in the war. And we drive it wherever we please—you see—and no one's the wiser."

He nodded and for a moment, across the raven-blue and gold of the water, he saw the spires and smokestacks and tiny bridges of the city black as a row of needles burnt and tipped with red. The tide had risen to its high mark and the gangway was nearly vertical; going down he burned his palm on the tarred rope, twice lost his footing. The engines were loud now. Except for Hencher and himself, except for the officer posted at the foot of the gangway and a seaman standing by each of the hawsers fore and aft, the quay was deserted, and when the sudden blasting of the ship's whistle com-

menced the timbers shook, the air was filled with steam, the noise of the whistle sounded through the quay's dark cargo shed. Then it stopped, except for the echoes in the shed and out on the water, and the man gave his head a shake as if he could not rid it of the whistling. He held up an unlighted cigarette and Hencher handed him the cigar.

"Oh," said the officer, "it's you two again. Find the lady in question all right?"

"We found her, Captain. She's comfy, thanks, good and comfy."

"Well, according to schedule we tie up here tomorrow morning at twenty past eight."

"My friend and me will come fetch her on the dot, Captain, good as my word. . . ."

Again the smothering whistle, again the sound of chain, someone shouted through a megaphone and the gangway rose up on a cable; the seamen hoisted free the ropes, the bow of the Artemis began to swing, the officer stepped over the widening space between quay and ship and was gone.

"Come," said Hencher and took hold of his arm, "we can watch from the shed."

They leaned against a crate under the low roof and there were rats and piles of dried shells and long dark empty spaces in the cargo shed. There were holes in the flooring: if he moved the toe of his shoe his foot would drop off into the water; if he moved his hand there would be the soft pinch of fur or the sudden burning of dirty teeth. Only Hencher and himself and the rats. Only scum, the greasy water and a punctured and sodden dory beneath them—filth for a man to fall into.

"There . . . she's got the current now."

He stared with Hencher toward the lights, small gallery of decks and silhouetted stacks that was the Artemis a quarter mile off on the river.

"They'll have their fun on that little ship tonight and with a moon too or I miss my guess. Another half hour," Hencher was twisting, trying for a look at his watch in the dark, "and I'll bring the lorry round."

Side by side, rigid against the packing crate, listening to the rats plop down, waiting, and all the while marking the disappearance of the excursion boat. Only the quay's single boom creaking in the

wind and a view of the river across the now empty berth was left to them, while ahead of the Artemis lay a peaceful sea worn smooth by night and flotillas of landing boats forever beached. With beer and music in her saloon she off there making for the short sea cliffs, for the moonlit coast and desolate windy promontories into which the batteries had once been built. At three a.m. her navigator discovering the cliffs, fixing location by sighting a flat tin helmet nailed to a stump on the tallest cliff's windy lip, and the Artemis would approach the shore and all of them—boy, girl, lonely woman—would have a glimpse of ten miles of coast with an iron fleet half-sunk in the mud, a moonlit vision of windlasses, torpedo tubes, skein of rusted masts and the stripped hull of a destroyer rising stern first from that muddied coast under the cliffs. Beside the rail the lonely woman at least, and perhaps the rest of them, would see the ten white coastal miles, the wreckage safe from tides and storms and snowy nights, the destroyer's superstructure rising respectable as a lighthouse keeper's station. All won, all lost, all over, and for half a crown they could have it now, this seawreck and abandon and breeze of the ocean surrounding them. And the boy at least would hear the moist unjoyful voice of his girl while the Artemis remained off shore, would feel the claspknife in the pocket of her skirt and, down on the excursion boat's hard deck, would know the comfort to be taken with a young girl worn to thinness and wiry and tough as the titlings above the cliffs.

He stood rigid against the packing crate, alone. He waited deep within the shed and watched, sniffed something that was not of rats or cargo at all. Then he saw it drifting along the edges of the quay, rising up through the rat holes round his shoes: fog, the inevitable white hair strands which every night looped out across the river as if once each night the river must grow old, clammy, and in its age and during these late hours only, produce the thick miles of old woman's hair within whose heaps and strands it might then hide all bodies, tankers, or fat iron shapes nodding to themselves out there.

Fog of course and he should have expected it, should have carried a torch. Yet, whatever was to come his way would come, he knew, like this—slowly and out of a thick fog. Accidents, meetings unexpected, a figure emerging to put its arms about him: where to discover everything he dreamed of except in a fog? And, thinking of slippery corners, skin suddenly bruised, grappling hooks going

blindly through the water: where to lose it all if not in the same white fog?

Look sharp, look sharp . . . that's a good laugh.

Alone he waited until the great wooden shed was filled with the fog that caused the rotting along the water's edge. His shirt was flat, wet against his chest. The forked iron boom on the quay was gone, and as for the two tankers that marked the vacated berth of the excursion boat, he knew they were there only by the dead sounds they made. All about him was the visible texture and density of the expanding fog. He was listening for the lorry's engine, with the back of a hand kept trying to wipe his cheek.

An engine was nearby suddenly, and despite the fog he knew that it was not Hencher's lorry but was the river barge approaching on the lifting tide. And he was alone, shivering, helpless to give a signal. He had no torch, no packet of matches. No one trusted a man's voice in a fog.

All the bells and whistles in mid-river were going at once and, hearing the tones change, the strokes change, listening to the metallic or compressed air sounds of sloops or ocean-going vessels protesting their identities and their vague shifting locations on the whole of this treacherous and fog-bound river's surface—a horrible noise, a confused warning, a frightening celebration—he knew that only his own barge, of all this night's drifting or anchored traffic, would come without lights and making no sound except for the soft and faltering sound of the engine itself. This he heard—surely someone was tinkering with it, nursing it, trying to stop the loss of oil with a bare hand—and each moment he waited for even these illicit sounds to go dead. But in the fog the barge engine was turning over and, all at once, a man out there cleared his throat.

So he stood away from the packing crate and slowly went down to his hands and knees and discovered that he could see a little distance now and began to crawl. He feared that the rats would get his hands; he ran his fingers round the crumbling edges of the holes; his creeping knee came down on fragments of a smashed bottle. There was an entire white sea-world floating and swirling in that enormous open door, and he crawled out to it.

"You couldn't do nothing about the bleeding fog?"

He had crossed the width of the quay, had got a grip on the iron joint of the boom and was trying to rise when the voice spoke up directly beneath him and he knew that if he fell it would not be

into the greasy and squid-blackened water but onto the deck of the barge itself. He was unable to look down yet, but it was clear that the man who had spoken up at him had done so with a laugh, casually, without needing to cup his hands.

Before the man had time to say it again—"You couldn't do nothing about the bleeding fog, eh, Hencher? I wouldn't ordinarily step out of the house on a night like this"—the quay had already shaken beneath the van's tires and the headlamps had flicked on, suddenly, and hurt his eyes where he hung from the boom, one hand thrown out for balance and the other stuck like a dead man's to the iron. Hencher, carrying two bright lanterns by wire loops, had come between himself and the lorry's yellow headlamps—"Lively now, Mr. Banks," he was saying without a smile—and had thrust one of the lanterns upon him in time to reach out his freed hand and catch the end of wet moving rope on the instant it came lashing up from the barge. So that the barge was docked, held safely by the rope turned twice round a piling when he himself was finally able to look straight down and see it, the long and blunt-nosed barge riding high in a smooth bowl scooped out of the fog. Someone had shut off the engine.

"Take a smoke now, Cowles—just a drag, mind you—and we'll get on with it."

She ought to see her hubby now. She ought to see me now.

He had got his arm through the fork of the boom and was holding the lantern properly, away from his body and down, and the glare from its reflector lighted the figure of the man Cowles below him and in cold wet rivulets drifted sternward down the length of the barge. Midships were three hatches, two battened permanently shut, the third covered by a sagging canvas. Beside this last hatch and on a bale of hay sat a boy naked from the waist up and wearing twill riding breeches. In the stern was a small cabin. On its roof, short booted legs dangling over the edge, a jockey in full racing dress sat with a cigarette now between his lips and hands clasped round one of his tiny knees.

"Cowles! I want off . . . I want off this bloody coop!" he shouted.

The cigarette popped into his mouth then. It was a trick he had. The lips were pursed round the hidden cigarette and the little man was staring up not at Cowles or Hencher but at himself, and even while Cowles was ordering the two of them, boy and jockey, to get a hop on and drag the tarpaulin off the hold, the jockey kept looking up at him, toe of one little boot twitching left and right but the large

bright eyes remained fixed on his own—until the cigarette popped out again and the dwarfed man allowed himself to be helped from his seat on the cabin roof by the stable boy whose arms, in the lantern light, were upraised and spattered with oil to the elbows.

"Get a hop on now, we want no coppers or watchmen or dock inspectors catching us at this bit of game. . . ."

The fog was breaking, drifting away, once more sinking into the river. Long shreds of it were wrapped like rotted sails or remnants of a wet wash round the buttresses and hand-railings of the bridges, and humped outpourings of fog came rolling from within the cargo shed as if all the fuels of this cold fire were at last consumed. The wind had started up again, and now the moon was low, just overhead.

"Here, use my bleeding knife, why don't you?"

The water was slimy with moonlight, the barge itself was slimy—all black and gold, dripping—and Cowles, having flung his own cigarette behind him and over the side, held the blade extended and moved down the slippery deck toward the boy and booted figure at the hatch with the slow embarrassed step of a man who at any moment expects to walk upon eel or starfish and trip, lose his footing, sprawl heavily on a deck as unknown to him as this.

"Here it is now, Mr. Banks!" He felt one of Hencher's putty hands quick and soft and excited on his arm. "Now you'll see what there is to see."

He looked down upon the naked back, the jockey's nodding cap, the big man Cowles and the knife stabbing at the ropes, until Cowles grunted and the three of them pulled off the tarpaulin and he was staring down at all the barge carried in its hold: the black space, the echo of bilge and, without movement, snort, or pawing of hoof, the single white marble shape of the horse whose neck (from where he leaned over, trembling, on the quay) was the fluted and tapering neck of some serpent while the head was an elongated white skull with nostrils, eye sockets, uplifted gracefully in the barge's hold—*Draftsman by Engraver's Hand out of Shallow Draft by Amulet, Castle Churl by Draftsman out of Likely Castle by Cold Masonry, Rock Castle by Castle Churl out of Words on Rock by Plebeian—until tonight when he's ours, until tonight when he's ours. . . .*

"Didn't I tell you, Mr. Banks? Didn't I . . . Good as his word, that's Hencher."

The whistles died one by one on the river and it was not Wednesday at all, only a time slipped off its cycle with hours and darkness

never to be accounted for. There was water viscous and warm that lapped the sides of the barge; a faint up and down motion of the barge which he could gauge against the purple rings of a piling; and below him the still crouched figures of the men and, in its moist alien pit, the silver horse with its ancient head round which there buzzed a single fly as large as his own thumb and molded of shining blue wax.

He stared down at the lantern-lit blue fly and the animal whose ears were delicate and unfeeling, as unlikely to twitch as two pointed fern leaves etched on glass, and whose silver coat gleamed with the colorless fluid of some ghostly libation and whose decorous drained head smelled of a violence that was his own.

Even when he dropped the lantern—"No harm done, no harm done," Hencher said quickly—the horse did not shy or throw itself against the ribs of the barge, but remained immobile, fixed in the same standing posture of rigorous sleep that they had found it in at the moment the tarpaulin was first torn away. Though Cowles made his awkward lunge to the rail, saw what it was—lantern with cracked glass half-sunk, still burning on the water, then abruptly turning dark and sinking from sight—and laughed through his nose, looked up at them: "Bleeding lot of help he is. . . ."

"No harm done," said Hencher again, sweating and by light of the van's dim headlamps swinging out the arm of the boom until the cable and hook were correctly positioned above the barge's hold. "Just catch the hook, Cowles, guide it down."

Without a word, hand that had gripped the lantern still trembling, he took his place with Hencher at the iron bar which, given the weight of Hencher and himself, would barely operate the cable drum. He got his fingers round the bar; he tried to think of himself straining at such a bar, but it was worse for Hencher whose heart was sunk in fat. Yet Hencher too was ready—in tight shirtsleeves, his jacket removed and hanging from the tiny silver figure of a winged man that adorned the van's radiator cap—so that he himself determined not to let go of the bar as he had dropped the lantern but, instead, to carry his share of the horse's weight, to stay at the bar and drum until the horse could suffer this last transport. There was no talking on the barge. Only sounds of their working, plash of the boy's feet in the bilge, the tinkle of buckles and strap ends as the webbed bands were slid round the animal's belly and secured.

Hencher was whispering: "Ever see them lift the bombs out of the

craters? Two or three lads with a tripod, some lengths of chain, a few red flags and a rope to keep the children away . . . then cranking up the unexploded bomb that would have bits of debris and dirt sticking peacefully as you please to that filthy big cylinder . . . something to see, men at a job like that and fishing up a live bomb big enough to blow a cathedral to the ground." Then, feeling a quiver: "But here now, lay into it gently, Mr. Banks, that's the ticket."

He pushed—Hencher was pushing also—until after a moment the drum stopped and the cable that stretched from the tip of the boom's arm down to the ring swiveling above the animal's webbed harness was taut.

"O.K." It was Cowles kneeling at the hold's edge, speaking softly and clearly on the late night air. "O.K. now . . . up he goes."

The barge which could support ten tons of coal or gravel on the river's oily and slop-sullied tide was hardly lightened when the horse's hoofs swung a few inches free of that planking hidden and awash. But drum, boom, cable and arms could lift not a pound more than this, and lifted this—the weight of the horse—only with strain and heat, pressure and rusted rigidity. Though his eyes were closed he knew when the boom swayed, could feel the horse beginning to sway off plumb. He heard the drum rasping round, heard the loops of rusted cable wrapping about the hot drum one after another, slowly.

"Steady now, steady . . . he's bloody well high enough."

Then, as Hencher with burned hands grasped the wheel that would turn the boom its quarter circle and position the horse over quay, not over barge, he felt a fresh wind on his cheek and tilted his head, opened his eyes, and saw his second vision of the horse: up near the very tip of the iron arm, rigid and captive in the sling of two webbed bands, legs stiff beneath it, tail blown out straight on the wind and head lifted—they had wrapped a towel round the eyes—so that high in the air it became the moonlit spectacle of some giant weather-vane. And, seeing one of the front legs begin to move, to lift, and the hoof—that destructive hoof—rising up and dipping beneath the slick shoulder, seeing this slow gesture of the horse preparing to paw suddenly at the empty air, and feeling the tremor through his fingers still lightly on the bar: "Let him down, Hencher, let him down!" he cried and waved both hands at the blinded and hanging horse even as it began to descend.

Until the boom regained its spring and balance like a tree spared

from a gale; until the drum, released, clattered and in its rusty mechanism grew still; until the four sharp hoofs touched wood of the quay. Cowles—first up the ladder and followed by Jimmy Needles the jockey and Lovely the stableboy—reached high and loosed the fluttering towel from round its eyes. The boy approached and snapped a lead-rope to the halter and the jockey, never glancing at the others or at the horse, stepped up behind him, whispering: "Got a fag for Needles, Mister? Got a fag for Needles?" Not until this moment when he shouted, "Hencher, don't leave me, Hencher. . . ." and saw the fat naked arm draw back and the second lantern sail in an arc over the water, and in a distance also saw the white hindquarters on the van's ramp and dark shapes running, not until this moment was he grateful for the little hard cleft of fingers round his arm and the touch of the bow-legged figure still begging for his fag but pulling and guiding him at last in the direction of the cab's half-open door. Cowles had turned the petcocks and behind them the barge was sinking.

These five rode crowded together on the broad seat, five white faces behind a rattling windscreen. Five men with elbows gnawing at elbows, hands and pairs of boots confused, men breathing hard and remaining silent except for Hencher who complained he hadn't room to drive. In labored first gear and with headlights off, they in the black van traveled the slow bumping distance down the length of the cargo shed, from plank to rotted plank moved slowly in the van burdened with their own weight and the weight of the horse until at the corner of the deserted building—straight ahead lay darkness that was water and all five, smelling sweat and river fumes and petrol, leaned forward together against the dim glass—they turned and drove through an old gate topped with a strand of barbed wire and felt at last hard rounded cobblestones beneath the tires.

"No one's the wiser now, lads," said Hencher, and laughed, shook the sweat from his eyes, took a hand off the wheel and slapped Cowles' knee. "We're just on a job if anyone wants to know," smiling, both fat hands once more white on the wheel. "So we've only to sit tight until we make Highland Green . . . eh, Cowles . . . eh, Needles . . . eh, Mr. Banks?"

But he himself, beneath the jockey and pressed between Cowles' thick flank and the unupholstered door, was sickening: smells of men, smells of oil, lingering smells of the river and now, faint yet

definite, seeping through the panel at his back, smells of the horse—all these mixed odors filled his mouth, his stomach, and some hard edge of heel or brake lever or metal that thrust down from the dash was cutting into his ankle, hurting the bone. Under his buttocks he felt the crooked shape of a spanner; from a shelf behind the thin cushions straw kept falling; already the motor was overheated and they were driving too fast in the darkness of empty market districts and areas of cheap lodgings with doorways and windows black except for one window, seven or eight streets ahead of them, in which a single light would be burning. And each time this unidentified black shabby van went round a corner he felt the horse—his horse—thump against one metal side or the other. Each time the faint sound and feel of the thumping made him sick.

"Hencher. I think you had better leave me off at the flat."

Then trying to breathe, trying to explain, trying to argue with Hencher in the speeding overheated cab and twisting, seeing the fluted dark nostril at a little hole behind the driver's head. Until Hencher smiled his broad worried smile and in a loud voice said: "Oh well, Mr. Banks is a married man," speaking to Cowles, the jockey, the stable boy, nudging Cowles in the ribs. "And you must always make allowance for a married man. . . ."

Cowles yawned, and, as best he could, rubbed at his great coat-sleeves still wet from the spray. "Leave him off, Hencher, if he gives us a gander at the wife."

The flat door is open and the cat sleeps. Just inside the door, posted on a straight chair, market bag at her feet and the cat at her feet, sitting with the coat wrapped round her shoulders and the felt hat still on her head: there she waits, waits up for him. The neighbor on the chair next to her is sleeping—like the cat—and the mouth is half-open with the breath hissing through, and the eyes are buried under curls. But her own eyes are level, the lips red, the face smooth and white and soft as soap. Waiting up for him.

Without moving, without taking her eyes from the door: "Where's Michael off to? Where's my Michael gone?" she asks the cat. Then down the outer hall, in the dark of the one lamp burning, she hears the click of the house key, the sound of the loose floor board, and she thinks to raise a hand and dry her cheek. With the same hand she touches her neighbor's arm.

"It's all right, Mrs. Stickley," she whispers, "he's home now."

NORMA FARBER:

Transaction Under the Sun

Mallard, my eyeful, my metaphor,
swim to me reaching with breadcrusts
leaning to feed you on leftovers

mildewing downy my breadbox.
Mallard, my pet, my analogy,
come to the call of my moldy

croutons. The crown of your hungering
shines like a greenness of simile
into my mind. Pretty pond-bird

fletching my thoughts without forfeiting
even the flick of a barbule:
what a transaction from water

to shore. You quack to a staleness of
gift, while I garble to glorify
sun on your yesterday feathers.

Belief is a Dolphin

A metaphor comes up like credence
out of our seas of doubt, and the air
is creatured with dolphins surfacing.

Leaning from deck we assign delight
to shapes half-clearly breaking the deep:
half over the water, half under, in playful

witness of being beneath our hull.
Creation cavorts to our eye like a word
of faith leapt up to lips. Our porpoise

tongue hints of a wholeness thrashing
beyond: it bespeaks the probable image,
fins and all, still less than visible.

No perfect fish on the littoral
vaults like the figures we half inventing
hardly verify in the fathoming distance.

Sounding by Night

Speak out in the night and find us.
Else we go lost till day.
Speak out in the blank. Send us

a sound. Shout us a hey
to respond to. The bat in the blindest
hour cries out his prey.

Halloo. Night has defined us
sightless. Hallooo, and see
what echo. Paradox planned us,

put slumber in our eye,
beam in our ear, and maybe
trumpets in our mind

to blow the fog that bound us.
Shout to us, Hear, can you hear?
Here, may we answer, here.

Gathering Horse Chestnuts

Harsh the night bristles to the touch.
Leave it, let it hang on the tree
lest it tear at you for taking.

Harsh the night. (Yet smooth in the kernel.)
Leave it, let it dangle on the tree
dribbling to wind, that forcible shaker.

Harsh the night now cracked in the seam.
Leave it still stemming to the tree.
Comes hand of time the hale day-breaker.

Harsh the bleak and breaching gullet
hung husky on the turning mien of tree.
Leave it, the old empty socket.

Now stoop for morning smooth on the pavement
cushioned in the fall of overhanging tree.
Now pick up sun flushed crimson lacquer.

Letting Go

Laden with loot of the sea, we are leaving
behind us the heaviest shells and the longest
thong of weed and the broken backs

of crabs. Selecting the residue jettison,
keeping the prime, the pick of the combing,
trundle we up the shore to the boardwalk.

Heavier moment by moment with riches,
halt we here in our opulence, haltingly
burying half of it into a trash-barrel

timely provided. Hie we home with the
best of the beach in our bag like icons, the
true representers. Some sand is still in the

chink of the urchin, and evermore chafing our
creases. Much later we chuck in the discard an
image, another, another, retaining but two, then one, then none,
not even a starfish,
not even a. . . . .

HERBERT A. PERLUCK:

"The Heart's Driving Complexity": An Unromantic Reading of Faulkner's "The Bear"

The usual reading of "The Bear" makes of Isaac McCaslin a kind of saint who by repudiating his inheritance the desecrated land upon which a whole people has been violated performs an act of expiation and atonement which is a model for those acts that must follow before the curse upon the land is lifted. Ike's repudiation of the land, at twenty-one, with which the tortuous inner section of "The Bear" opens, and over which he and his cousin, McCaslin Edmonds, debate in the commissary, is seen in terms of what the reader understands Ike to have learned and attained under the influence of Sam Fathers in the untainted Wilderness: the "freedom and humility and pride." The story is of one man's repudiation of the forces of greed and materialism that have all but extinguished God's hope for man of freedom and generosity.

The whole sequence of the commissary, the Beauchamp legacy, and the later life of Isaac McCaslin, is thus ordinarily taken as a sort of complementary sequel to what may be called the hunt-narrative; Part IV in the total structure and intention of the work is a filling-out, past and future, of the "story proper," as it is sometimes regarded: the hunt-narrative and especially the episode of the fyce, in which the later renunciation, at twenty-one, is prefigured.

There is much, however, in this difficult portion of the work that suggests a contrary view. Instead of a romantic Christian pastoral of redemption, in which the repudiation of the land and earlier the apparently selfless rescue of the fyce from under the erect bear are seen as almost sanctifying gestures of renunciation, a searing tragedy of human desire and human limitation evolves, chiefly through ironic means. From McCaslin's scornful skepticism as he listens to Ike's account of God's circuitous providence, and the "lip-lift" of contempt when he realizes that even Ike does not wholly believe in his "freedom," to the almost hysterical laughter with which Part IV concludes, the principal effects are ironic.

The central thematic irony, however, upon which these effects are grounded, is slowly constructed of larger elements. The repudiation in the commissary *is* prefigured in the hunt-narrative; something of a parallel does develop between the selfless non-possession of Ike's gesture at twenty-one and the repudiation of passion earlier—that effort to preserve the idyll of the Big Woods, in the reluctance of both Ike and Sam Fathers to slay Old Ben. But the point of the parallel is not merely to provide background and extension to the "story-proper"; it is drawn and pressed home by McCaslin Edmonds on Ike because in both gestures there is weakness and something even sinister which cannot become clear to McCaslin, or to the reader, until the dense and complex drama of the debate in the commissary is enacted.

The terrible irony of Part IV develops in the growing awareness in the reader, as well as in the characters, of the discrepancy between what we and Ike supposed him to have achieved, to have attained to, and what in fact his repudiations actually represent. The whole inner section of "The Bear" reflects back on the hunt-narrative and forward into the last sequence: Ike's return at eighteen to the woods, which are being destroyed by the lumber company; his vague, troubled guilt at the sight of the nearly demented, grieving Boon. Coming where it does in the story structure, Part IV has the effect of making the reader, as it makes Ike and McCaslin, remember and painfully reinterpret the earlier events as of some dream-idyll of human perfection, of perhaps a kind of angelic pre-existence, now dissipated in the wakeful glare of the human reality. Slowly and relentlessly, Faulkner's intention takes hold in Part IV, in the tragic incompleteness of man, as the gulf is drawn between action, life as lived, and the memory of action and events, in which our dreams of life, our poems, are created.

"The Bear" is no Saint's Life; on the contrary, what it expresses ultimately is that there is no "freedom" in renunciation, no sanctity through repudiation—that actually there is no such thing as human sainthood as we have conceived it. If Isaac McCaslin is a saint at all, it is not in the traditional ascetic sense of a successful renunciation of the world and the flesh in atonement and expiation; it is rather a "sainthood" of *un*success, an unwitting, unwilled elevation produced in the tragic *defeat* of spirit and soul in the "uncontrollable mystery" of the world which men and "saints" must live in perforce. In much the same way that Kafka's Bucketrider is unaccountably

(to him) "upraised" into the "regions of the icy mountains and [is] lost forever," Isaac McCaslin ascends without comprehending wherein that only "sainthood" man is allowed resides: in the anguished, complex heart. "The Bear" is a story of a renunciation that fails, as they all must. It is also the story of man's ineluctable fate of being only man. And on another level, it is a parable of man's pride, in his trying to be more than man, and of the evil this pride accomplishes in its condescending ascription of all that man does not want to see in himself to a certain few untouchables, the Boons of the world.

II

Let us begin with the passage in Part IV, which may be called the Ode sequence, where Ike and his cousin McCaslin are suddenly brought back to an incident that had taken place seven years before this moment in the commissary, because it is the interpretative heart of the story. In the debate, or dialogue, between Ike and McCaslin, the former has been trying all along to explain God's ways of instrumenting His hope, which He knows is doomed to unfulfillment, that man will learn humility, will be redeemed, through suffering. To McCaslin's amazed and sardonic incredulity ("Turned back to us? His face to us?"), Ike has argued that God used the War as an instrument for bringing about the redemption of the South ("So He turned once more to this land which He still intended to save because He had done so much for it. . . ."). McCaslin remembers the bad luck of the South in the War, the mere chance, frequently, by which that gallant manhood was defeated by a really unimpassioned, materialistic, and somewhat effete North. "How else have made them fight? Who else but Jacksons and Stuarts and Ashbys and Morgans and Forrests?" Ike asks. "Well, maybe that's what He wanted," McCaslin grudgingly admits. "At least that's what He got." And there is a pause as they consider silently the aftermath of the War, "that dark corrupt and bloody time" of Reconstruction. And then McCaslin merely lifts his arm toward the desk in the commissary where the current ledger sits, "that dark chronicle which was a whole land in miniature, which multiplied and compounded was the entire South, twenty-three years after surrender and twenty-four from emancipation . . ." His gesture signifies, without words, his ironic commentary on the fruition of God's devious providence, as if he had said, Well, what good has it done, the War and the aftermath? They are still slaves!

Ike understands the gesture: "Yes. Binding them for a while yet, a little while yet." "But not always," he continues, "because they will endure. They will outlast us because they are . . . better than we are. Stronger than we are," he at last forces himself to admit, but only after momentarily hesitating to say that much, to admit what was heresy even to him in this very time and act of his repudiation, of his atonement. He recognizes in his faltering hesitancy that there is more in him of Grandfather, whom Ike is in a sense repudiating by giving up his inheritance—more in him of the general evil that his grandfather represents than he has wanted to acknowledge. He proceeds, shaken with this insight, not lost on McCaslin, to that provocative admission, around which the whole of Part IV, and the rest of the story, is constructed, that the Negro will endure and outlast the white man, because, inheriting freedom from the "old free fathers," he has been "a longer time free than us because"— and they stop at this, looking at each other, knowing that at last the important thing is about to be uttered—"we have never been free."

The convulsion of the spoken and the unspoken admissions leads directly, in the drama of the debate, to the Ode sequence. The dramatic explanation of how these are related—*why* they stop at this particular point in their discourse—concerns us now, and interpretation here illuminates much of the rest. Why should they halt, as if struck—especially McCaslin—and remember events and talk that had taken place so long before?

This time, instead of looking toward the shelf of ledgers, they look at each other, remembering the time seven years before, when Ike and Sam Fathers and a little nameless fyce ambushed Old Ben and could have killed him, but neither one did. There had been time to shoot before the heedless and blindly courageous dog went in at Old Ben; they were only twenty yards away, and couldn't have missed; but instead Ike dashed in under the bear to save the dog—or so at least he (and later, when Sam Fathers told him about it, his cousin McCaslin too) had understood it. "And you didn't shoot," McCaslin had said later when they discussed it together. "How close were you?"

> "I don't know," he said. "There was a big wood tick just inside his off hind leg. I saw that. But I didn't have the gun then."
>
> "But you didn't shoot when you had the gun," McCaslin said. "Why?"

His cousin had got up suddenly at this point, and crossing the room,

brought back a book, from which he read Ike the "Ode on a Grecian Urn."

> "She cannot fade, though thou hast not thy bliss," McCaslin said: "Forever wilt thou love, and she be fair."
>
> "He's talking about a girl," he said.
>
> "He had to talk about something," McCaslin said. Then he [McCaslin] said, "He was talking about truth. Truth is one. It doesn't change. It covers all things which touch the heart—honor and pride and pity and justice and courage and love. Do you see now?"

All this, and more, that they had then spoken and thought passes through their minds, as they merely look at each other. In this moment, the memory, never really far submerged, comes flooding back: that time seven years before when McCaslin tried to explain to Ike, by quoting the "Ode," why Ike saved the fyce instead of killing Old Ben, or at least what McCaslin had thought then—that the humility and pride Ike had wanted to learn in order to become worthy of the Wilderness and of a manhood in which the Bear was hunted by men like Sam Fathers, Major de Spain, Walter Ewell, and McCaslin, that these he had just learned, had come to possess, through forbearance and selfless courage, through, in short, a kind of renunciation, *non*-possession. McCaslin's purpose in quoting Keats had been to show Ike how we may pursue bravely and fiercely and yet not kill, out of pity and love; how we may love by not loving; how we may be proud and humble, fierce and gentle, at the same time; how by not possessing in the heart we may possess all. The heart, which contains these beautiful paradoxes, "knows" truth, the only truth worth knowing, the only truth one needs to know. "Courage and honor and pride," McCaslin had repeated at the very end of the discussion, "and pity and love of justice and of liberty. They all touch the heart, and what the heart holds to becomes truth, as far as we know truth. Do you see now?" he had asked once more. —But he didn't tell him, and probably didn't know it himself until much later, in the commissary with Ike, forced by his cousin's argument and repudiation of the land to defend his own entire existence, that this is only the heart's "truth," and is not all we need to know, that there is a difference between knowing in the heart or in a poem and the imperfect knowing of life, between *any* sort of knowing and living.

"Because we have never been free," Ike has just hesitantly admitted, and they pause, looking at each other, both remembering, McCaslin, however, with something of bitterness and irony, with a

"faint lip-lift which would have had to be called smiling." He "smiles" now because he understands that this present repudiation of the land is a repetition of the gesture made first seven years before, and that Ike himself, in despair, as the words he has such difficulty uttering fall between them in the commissary, knows it. He understands, as he hadn't before, that Ike's failure to kill Old Ben was a way out, an escape from himself; that Keats had only helped him to repudiate, and so think he had *freed* himself from, what being human and alive in time imposes on a man. McCaslin hadn't told him that what we may know in the heart is not what we are allowed to live. The non-possession, the renunciations, and thus the "freedom" which may be realized in the heart—this Ike has tried to *live*. "Sam Fathers set me free," he protests to McCaslin. But the freedom he had indeed obtained was only the "freedom of the heart," which Sam Fathers showed him how to achieve by virtue of giving himself up to the Wilderness, as he does when he "relinquishes" his gun and compass and goes alone to see and be seen by Old Ben—much as Henry Fleming, in that other story of a boy's initiation into manhood, comes to touch the great god Death and discovers it is only death after all. He momentarily relinquishes self and pride, in effect—the way they are relinquished provisionally in a poem—the better to confront that naked red heart of the world, the Wilderness of the human heart, which is "free" only when it is so confronted and acknowledged. This "freedom" is from the blind, uncomprehending *fear* of the "Wilderness" and its creatures, but is not, as Ike would desire it—a confusion that leads to his agony in the commissary—a freedom from the necessary human commitment in acts and time. The moral freedom to choose *not* to act does not exist, except in the heart, where it is not a moral but a spiritual or aesthetic freedom. Sam Fathers set Ike free only in the sense of his enabling him to look at *all* that a man can feel and do, *all* that the "Wilderness" contains; he could not free him from himself. So it was not the fyce that had kept him from shooting—out of love and forbearance; he had, in fact, blanched from that full sight of himself as a man, who at the same time he was humble and loved the thing he pursued, was a slayer and ravener.

The "poem," as it were, that Ike has tried to live is one in which his hunting of Old Ben but his not having to kill him is the chief symbol—as it is even now in the commissary. And it *was* very much like the girl and the youth on the Urn, although Ike had not quite

been able to see the analogy. He has wished, Hamlet-like, to kill and yet not kill, to realize fully a state of "being" out of time, which is realized only in a play, in art, and in the complex heart. But the Prince must slay, the hunter must slay; they cannot, if they would be princes and hunters, preserve that moment of excruciated sensibility in the timeless drama of the heart. The "Old Free Fathers" were aware of this painful human paradox of action, in which man commits himself in the irrevocable, and they celebrated it in the sacramental gesture of grief and responsibility (but there was also pride) for the life they spilled: a consecrating gesture—the smearing the warm blood of a youth's first kill on his forehead—which absolved a man from *regret* but not from *grief*. (See "The Old People," in *Go Down, Moses,* Mod. Lib. ed., pp. 181-2.)

Ike would be absolved from both. He remembers having thought, when his cousin read him the "Ode," that his not killing Old Ben had been

> . . . simpler than somebody talking in a book about a young man and a girl *he would never need to grieve over* because he could never approach any nearer and would never have to get any further away. He had heard about an old bear and finally got big enough to hunt it and he hunted it four years and at last met it with a gun in his hands and he didn't shoot. Because a little dog —But he could have shot long before the fyce covered the twenty yards to where the bear waited, and Sam Fathers could have shot at any time during the interminable minute while Old Ben stood on his hind legs over them. . . . (My italics.)

But it had been the same thing. Saving the fyce had meant a repudiation, like the present one in the commissary, of a necessary suffering, an escape, a *freedom* from grieving.

He was "repudiating immolation," as he tells McCaslin earlier, before the full implications become clear to them both through the memory of the fyce and Ike's tortured "admission," because "fatherless"—and he might have added son-less—he was "therefore safe declining the altar" which an already outraged God was preparing. He could repudiate, or forestall, his own self-sacrifice, because in anticipating God by "accepting," he could avoid grieving, and because in surrendering all, in relinquishing the human desires which made God see his whole race as "all Grandfather all of them," there would be nothing for him, no son, to sacrifice, nothing to be taken away. Fatherless and solitary, Ike has felt that he was excepted, exempted, from a father's guilty wish and hope of sacrificing his dearest posses-

sion to the demanding, wrathful God, in atonement and expiation. The sins of the South were his *fathers'* sins, not his, and so he can repudiate immolation, his fathers' sacrifice, being fatherless, by repudiating his fathers' accursed possessions—his inheritance and heritage. He may "decline the altar" because, guiltless (*he* will not have enslaved the Negro, *he* will not have killed Old Ben, *he* will have no possessions), he would be purposelessly taken, instead of the kid this time, by a finally hopeless and impatient God. In his own eyes—or so he wants to understand it—Ike is "escaping," as he admits to McCaslin, to be able to cut off, at least as far as his family is concerned, the line of blood guilt and injustice to the Negro and the land. Now, McCaslin "smiling," each knowing that the other is remembering the same events, McCaslin recognizes the repudiation of the land for what it is—an escape from an immolation required of all men, from an immolation that defines man.

But Ike has been approaching this recognition on his own. Even at the time of the fyce incident he had been uneasy ("Because a little dog—But he could have shot. . . ."); even then there had been in the back of his mind considerable doubt as to why he had not shot. Now, in the debate with his cousin, brought to the difficult admission that "we have never been free," McCaslin "smiling" as he sees the truth being pressed home on Ike, he still resists it, still struggles to push aside the real knowledge. Indeed, we may say that the power, the dramatic tension which underlies this entire section is generated here, in exactly this half-knowledge of the rationalization he has constructed for himself. What follows in the remainder of the commissary sequence is strongly informed by this tension.

So the interpretation of the Ode sequence—its function in Part IV, and indeed of the whole section and its relation to the rest of the story—must be made on the play between what the incident of the fyce meant to the characters when it took place, seven years before Part IV opens, and what it means now as it is remembered in the commissary and as it is being reinterpreted. We must read the meaning of the Ode sequence dramatically, so to speak, before the larger meanings begin to unfold.

Returning to the debate where we left it—the Ode sequence, the "pause" concluding—we may now read those final remarks between the two men in a dramatic setting which alters their meaning considerably from what they may seem to be "saying." The tension

just mentioned can be read most clearly here. *How* they are said, especially Ike's words, is the important thing.

McCaslin sneers, at least "smiles," as we have seen, and Ike senses the ground of his rationalization crumbling before McCaslin's cold irony. McCaslin breaks the silence, the "pause": "*Habet* then.—so this land is, indubitably, of and by itself cursed." He has seen in Ike's admissions and in the fact of his being taken immediately back by them to the fyce episode that Ike knows too that they and the land are cursed. And Ike echoes, "Cursed," nevertheless still excepting himself from it, still persisting in his belief he can remove himself from its burden. Relentless, McCaslin urges again upon Ike the difficult truth, so much more pointed now, which he has been trying all along to make him take up:

> "And since I know too what you know I will say now, once more let me say it: And one other, and in the third generation too, and the male, the eldest, the direct and sole and white and still McCaslin even, from father to son to son—"

But Ike interrupts here: "I am free," he protests, not really believing, himself, that he can be free. McCaslin merely looks at him, perhaps with the same ironic "lip-lift," a look which implies

> . . . the frail and iron thread strong as truth and impervious as evil and longer than life itself and reaching beyond record and patrimony both to join him with the lusts and passions, the hopes and dreams and griefs, of bones whose names while still fleshed and capable even old Carothers' grandfather had never heard. . . .

And Ike, still protesting, although with an anguished defiance, weak in conviction: "And [free] of that too," —the human inheritance of lust and passion, which he would repudiate along with the land. But even this, as we see in the paroxysm of the conclusion to Part IV, he must come to realize is impossible for him.

The dialogue proper of Part IV—McCaslin still ironic and somewhat contemptuous—ends with McCaslin's defense of his own existence as a Southerner and a McCaslin, and with Ike still protesting:

> "Chosen, I suppose (I will concede it) out of all your time by Him, as you say Buck and Buddy were from theirs. And it took Him a bear and an old man and four years just for you. And it took you fourteen years to reach that point and about that many, maybe more, for Old Ben, and more than seventy for Sam Fathers. And you are just one. How long then? How long?" and he
>
> "It will be long. I have never said otherwise. But it will be all right because they will endure—" and McCaslin

> "And anyway, you will be free.—No, not now nor ever, we from them nor they from us. So I repudiate too. I would deny even if I knew it were true. I would have to. Even you can see that I could do no else. I am what I am; I will be always what I was born and have always been. And more than me. More than me, just as there were more than Buck and Buddy in what you called His first plan which failed": and he
>
> "And more than me": and McCaslin
>
> "No. Not even you. Because mark. You said how on that instant when Ikkemotubbe realized that he could sell the land to Grandfather, it ceased forever to have been his. All right; go on: Then it belonged to Sam Fathers, old Ikkemotubbe's son. And who inherited from Sam Fathers, if not you? co-heir perhaps with Boon, if not of his life maybe, at least of his quitting it?" and he
>
> "Yes. Sam Fathers set me free."

This last Ike repeats preoccupied, hearing but not hearing McCaslin, who is speaking a truth Ike does not want to hear because he knows it only too well; it is said loudly, almost hysterically, terrifiedly.

And the rest slopes off in intensity as the dialogue ends and we proceed to the Beauchamp legacy, that empty coffee-pot grail, and finally to the moving sequence that describes Ike's later submission to what he secretly knew without McCaslin's telling him: that "no man is ever free," that "they were all Grandfather all of them." The section ends with ironic laughter, corresponding in a way to McCaslin's "lip-lift." Ike's wife, in her naked sexuality, forces upon him a submission to life as it must be lived—as Addie Bundren had to live it—in action and commitment of the blood, not in words or poems or even in the heart. "'And that's all,'" Ike's wife tells him. "'That's all from me. If this dont get you that son you talk about, it wont be mine': lying on her side, her back to the empty rented room, laughing and laughing." So he too, even Ike who had renounced all, had wanted a son; but he had not wanted, at the same time, the commitment to life and passion, to possession, and the desire to pass things possessed down to sons—even if it is just an *idea*—which such commitment necessarily involves.

III

When we look back at the rest of the tale, it takes on a different and more profound aspect. We cannot stop, as virtually all commentaries on "The Bear" do, with a reading which interprets Boon's slaying of Old Ben as the triumph of the "new order" (Boon is not "pure"—a hard-eyed, moronic half-breed) over the Old Dispensa-

tion and the pure in heart. Altogether too much has been made of the socio-historical theme in "The Bear," a version of the over-simplifying Snopes-Sartoris polarity of Faulkner criticism. Unquestionably this note is struck in "The Bear": a certain sentimental and romantic textural layer; but it is really a dramatic element, one aspect of the dramatic indirection of the work. The romantic "meaning" is Ike's "meaning"—the way he would prefer to view the events in which he has participated and his own motives—but it is not ultimately Faulkner's.

The romantic note, to hypothesize a possible "genesis" of the work, enters by way of the earlier versions of the tale, and since whole passages from particularly the short stories "The Bear" and "Lion" are moved verbatim into the longer final story, we might expect something of the old flavor and meaning to become imbedded in the new, misleading readers who fail to push on through the informing renitencies of Part IV. (It would be a mistake, however, not to consider the romantic "meaning" as part of the full-length story *by design,* as well.) The earlier versions of the story *are* romantic and nostalgic, but the present work is not a mere fleshing-out of the same story; the earlier works are different, substantially as well as in tone and ultimate intention.

A comparison of the several versions suggests that the longer Faulkner thought about his originals the more the meaning shifted, the more he himself saw in the symbolic structure he had created in the hunt-narrative. And the more he reflected on the subtle meanings the symbol is capable of giving up, the less satisfied he became with the romantic, sentimental theme of the defeat of the "old order" by the materialistic New World—the less truth he found in it. In the final version of "The Bear," we must attribute it not to Faulkner himself, who is using it dramatically and in so doing transmuting it into a much harder truth, but to Isaac McCaslin.

To take this "genesis" of the work a step further, the deliberate and strategic removal of the Ode sequence from the conclusion of the short story "The Bear" to the central position it has in Part IV, together with certain changes in its tone and language, reflects this altered view of the narrative-symbol that Faulkner finally took. His attitude towards Ike's rescue of the fyce, for one thing, which is the whole matter of the short story, deepens—the way McCaslin's attitude does. Ike's concluding lines in the short story, which are spoken in answer to his father's (his cousin's in the present work) question, "Do you see now?" are changed from:

> Sam, and Old Ben, and Nip [the fyce], he thought. And himself too. He had been all right too. His father had said so. "Yes, sir," he said.

—this reply to the question, and his thought at the time, are changed to: "He didn't know. Somehow it had seemed simpler than that. . . ." The analogy, in the short story, the father wished to make by quoting the Ode is comparatively simple and straightforwardly romantic, and the general tone of the story bespeaks merely a certain sentimental nostalgia for the Old Times, and a boy's growing up. So he must have dwelt on the conclusion to the short story until it gave up an even more profound paradox than it did originally. And this is what drew him to ponder further the hunt symbolism itself, a composite mainly of the pursuit of Old Ben in the short story "The Bear" and the slaying of Old Ben in "Lion." ("The Old People," written as I suppose after the revised central story—although it precedes it in *Go Down, Moses*—and "Delta Autumn," which follows "The Bear," also show the same deepened theme. "The Old People," however, because it stands somewhat transitionally in theme and tone between the early and later stories of the Isaac McCaslin tale, could possibly have been written before the revision of "The Bear" but after the whole conception of the hunt and of Isaac McCaslin had begun already to be transformed in Faulkner's imagination. "Delta Autumn," the romantic theme now completely absent, or rather exorcised, clearly follows the full, harrowing, shuddering discoveries of "The Bear." It could not have been written without first undertaking that journey through the underworld and can only support the reading of "The Bear" itself that is being advanced here.)

Thus the structure of the revised work corresponds to Faulkner's own process of discovery, and, more important, to Ike's: the final meanings are discovered in the *memory* of action, of life, in poetry and in the heart, meanings which convulse the heart in its arriving at them, but meanings which nevertheless, even when they are found, cannot be lived in time and space. Life proceeds in action; there are no meanings until we reflect on acts, in a "poem," in words, either in the effort to comprehend what has been lived, or in the "poems" we conceive and propose for our futures. And so life for Faulkner and for his characters is hard to live, as poor bedevilled Addie Bundren knows (the only "reason for living was to get ready to stay dead a long time," her father had told her), because the "poems" we invent to explain life and to make it bearable never correspond

to the actual living. We romanticize the irredeemable past the way Ike remembers his dream-frieze of hunter and hunted, always pursuing and so never needing to grieve, and we dramatize, in ideal day-dreams of achievement and virtue, the appalling open-ended prospect of the future.

Ike's "poem" was, in fact, a renunciation of life, as all our "poems" tend to be—the "poems" we try to live, at any rate. And Ike is made to confront this in Part IV. The turgid rhetoric of the section, enforced by McCaslin's scorn, reflects the struggle Ike is undergoing. The lucid grace, on the other hand, of the narrative portions is Ike's remembered "poem"—and it is remembered in pain. Our "poems" are all the more lucid and graceful the more the chasm gapes for us between life as lived (as Ike, in this case, must begin to live) and what we would want life to be, what it can be only in art, and in the anguished heart. Our "poems" are more painful the more lucid and graceful they are. This is the hurt of art—why beauty is painful, seems to fall heavily across the heart: it recovers, or reclaims, partially and tentatively, a timeless state of Being, in which an original angelic integrity is re-constituted. Beauty is a form, rather a *type,* in the seventeenth-century sense, of the remembered Eden of the race, which we know only in the rare moments our dissociated faculties achieve a redintegration in art.[1] Faulkner's peculiar nostalgia, that constant suffusing tone of sometimes anguished memory in much that he has written, is a response to this condition of man's existence.

There is, indeed, a sort of lucid, dream-like, "remembered" quality, or tone, about the narrative portions of "The Bear," as we are reading it, but especially *as we remember it* in Part IV, where the lucidity of narrative is replaced by the tortured rhetoric of reason and reality, reason being in a way more like life—probationary, tentatively incomplete, not abstract; groping, fragmentary, imperceptive, not logical—than art is. The tone—most clearly felt when the War is considered, but really ubiquitous in his work—reflects, as perhaps R. P. Warren might put it, Faulkner's "pure" poetic in conflict with intransigent experience, with the irremediable past of our acts, either idealizing it in lucid narrative or, as it is more common in Faulkner and in modern writing in general, aggravating its refractory obtuseness in tangled rhetoric and atomized forms, both being art's chief

[1] See John Crowe Ransom, "The Tense of Poetry," in *The World's Body* (New York, 1938), pp. 233–260.

strategies (if we may imply anything at all of the deliberate in it), both deriving in the racking antinomy of art and life. The juxtaposition of *both* strategies in "The Bear" is primarily what gives the work its peculiar tragic form, made palpable largely by a kind of statuary imagery[2] which fixes—or better suspends—in the mythic dimension the contradiction of art and life, being and becoming, stasis and movement. (What remains in the imagination long after one has puzzled through the difficult *argument* of "The Bear" is the fixed, frieze-like image of the hunt, in which the ennobling pursuit *and* the slaying, the "poem" *and* life, are inextricably suspended. Ike himself sees it in these terms: the great bear "ran in his knowledge before he ever saw it. It loomed and towered in his dreams before he even saw the unaxed woods where it left its crooked print. . . .") The thwarted, wounded sense in Faulkner of the flow and passage of acts in time is thus manifested usually by images which are the opposite of movement but which convey in tragic tension the completeness of being, of art, and the incompleteness of becoming, of life. The one really makes the other possible in the virtually magical and fortuitous engendering of images. (But "engendering" says perhaps more than it was meant to say. "Materialization" would do the same thing, however: the one gives life, the other substance to the aesthetic phenomenon, which is neither, and at the same time both more and less, better and inferior, to life and substance.) Possibly all art achieves its effects through this opposition, in one form or another, between art and life. The whole painting, poem, novel, etc., is a "statuary image" in which being and becoming, the "poem" of life and life itself, merge. Faulkner, in any event, accentuates, exaggerates this aesthetic principle. His work, like a good deal of modern art, self-consciously exploits the principle of art; it is, in a sense, art about art.

This phenomenon, however, is not strictly a modern one, *Hamlet,* for example, showing the same concerns, although not with the same self-consciousness. Let us stay clear of invidious, treacherous comparisons and suggest merely an analogy: Faulkner has that certain Shakespearian melon-sense of the round ripe world, the world which, try as one may, like Hamlet, to embrace it all at once, to comprehend it, and so "be," defeats the human reason and finally even art. "The Bear," it may be ventured, is Faulkner's *Hamlet.* As

[2] See Karl E. Zink, "Flux and the Frozen Moment: The Imagery of Stasis in Faulkner's Prose," *PMLA,* LXXI (June, 1956), 285–301.

in Shakespeare's play, its rich and subtle interweaving teases us out of thought, confounds us too, and for the same perhaps self-defeating reasons: what is being "said" in and by art is that art and beauty—not to mention reason—are *not* truth, life's truth; that art, the "play," "being" are not life. Both *Hamlet* and "The Bear," in their ultimate intentions, are not wholly successful attempts to express what "life" is like, in works of art which enforce, I think deliberately, the sense of the difference between art and life, the sense of art's inadequacy before life, its failure to express, or "know" it. But how can one transcend the platform from which one sees or knows *any*thing so as to be able to see and know that platform itself? If art is in part a form of cognition functioning by an imitation of life, and if art, the moment it "fixes" life, becomes, or creates, something other than life (and it is perhaps exactly that flux, that *un*-fixedness, that we wish to "know" in art), then it must inevitably fail, in its cognitive function at least, and express whatever it can, whatever it is *possible* for it to express about life itself, being, only in an attitude of the artist's that we find reflected by the work as a secondary effect or function, by *tone,* as Eliot has said of *Hamlet.* This is the Shakespearian "melon-sense" of the world: that anguished, thwarting feel of the really inexpressible and inimitable.

Certainly no romantic conception of art and life comes out of all this, as has been inferred, but rather a harsh *naturalism* of the relation of the two which seems truer although more difficult—and in this Faulkner's great value consists. For Keats, for example ("Do I wake or sleep?"), reality and truth are in the dream, in the poem, and this is the only truth we need to know, the only reality. (Although in Brooks's and Tate's readings of Keats, the underlying tension in "Ode to a Nightingale" and "Ode on a Grecian Urn" is created by Keats's tacit apprehension that the Immortal Nature of the bird and the dynamic "life" of art are, after all, human death.) Faulkner, on the other hand, forces us not only to acknowledge the great discrepancy between life and art, but insists on the validity of the former as our "reality." Beauty isn't truth; it is rather a valuable sort of *un*-truth which helps make the truth of life bearable, as Nietzsche has said, even though it does so through pain. And we value beauty most, and correctly, when we are most aware of the truth we live. The heart may contain antinomies, as the Ode and the Urn do, but there is a fearful abyss between what the heart and poem hold, or "know," and what we may know in life, in time.

Faulkner's rhetoric evolves from his awareness of the irremediableness and irredeemableness of time and action; his art reflects his strained effort to hold or fix *all* that man is and feels, what cannot be held or fixed in life. And this he is able to express only with that weak instrument of the reason, language, which is *bound* by time and logic (the "platform"). So even the men who tried to express God's truth were "liars," in a sense:

> "Yes. Because they were human men. They were trying to write down the heart's truth out of the heart's driving complexity, for all the complex and troubled hearts which would beat after them. What they were trying to tell, what He wanted said, was too simple. Those for whom they transcribed His words could not have believed them. It had to be expounded in the everyday terms which they were familiar with and could comprehend, not only those who listened but those who told it too, because if they who were that near to Him as to have been elected from among all who breathed and spoke language to transcribe and relay His words, could comprehend truth only through the complexity of passion and lust and hate and fear which drives the heart, what distance back to truth must they traverse whom truth could only reach by word-of-mouth?"

To come back, reflection on the events of the Ode sequence, as it may have been the focal point of Faulkner's growth of insight, becomes for Ike, in the terms of the story, the fulcrum of his spiritual moving. And for the reader, the process of discovery is the same. Part IV, in a rhetoric that is more "statement," in its wrestled argumentativeness, than the preceding narrative, brings into an *abstract* tragic clarity the antinomies of life, which the narrative, while it is proceeding, when it is most like life—but only in the sense of its movement and commitment in action—cannot "state" or express clearly at all. The narrative-symbol becomes symbol only after it is concluded and we look back on it in its totality, in its self-containing integrity, which life as it is being lived cannot have. This is what Part IV brings us to perform, and why the organization of the work is such a consummate form: it compels us, as the debate in the commissary compels Ike, to remember, to try to "fix." The reader is thus brought to feel, so much more intimately than he could otherwise, that same poignant sense of time-remembered that Ike feels and with which the entire story is suffused. We remember, with the same sense of the irremediable past, already committed in time, the narrative action which is now transformed into symbolic

meaning—those same events and thoughts which Ike remembers and finds tragic meaning in, in the "heart's driving complexity." It could be shown that much of Faulkner's most effective work is similarly formed: a time remembered, a piecing together of the past, in which the reader himself becomes engaged.

We had been saying that the main action—the years of pursuit and the final slaying of Old Ben—must be reinterpreted in the light of a close reading of Part IV, and that, specifically, the romantic theme of the conquest of the "old order" by materialism is inadequate. The fyce episode has already been considered in its doubleness, but what are we to make of the more important aspect of the plot, Boon's slaying of Old Ben? How must we read this, and the final scene of the story where Boon hammers at his gun under the squirrel-filled tree, if the other elements are seen to contain ironies?

"So he should have hated and feared Lion," Part II begins. The words recur in this section which relates how the fierce, indomitable hound is at last found who will enable them to kill Old Ben, and they appear again at the very end of the section when the reluctant knowledge has grown into the certainty of the end of something they all have cherished. In the romantic reading of the work, these words mean only that the ferocious hound, whose eyes reflected "nothing of petty malevolence in them, but a cold and almost impersonal malignance like some natural force," and who represented the un-pitying not-man, or un-human, aspect of the world, had arrived to despoil the idyllic relationship of man and beast and Wilderness. This is the romantic and sentimental nature-vs.-materialism theme, which appears to be enforced by the association, in the story, of Lion and Boon, who lovingly and with great respect, or awe, cares for the fierce hound in his life and in his death. But unless this theme is understood dramatically, not as the total theme but as the meaning of events only as seen through Ike's eyes, we fail to see the further meaning in the recurrent words. If we assume Ike's point of view as our own, then Ike "should have hated and feared Lion" because he meant merely the end of something noble and worth preserving—"*should* have" because unexpectedly, for some reason, he *didn't.*

> It seemed to him that there was a fatality in it. It seemed to him that something, he didn't know what, was beginning; had already begun. It was like the last act on a set stage. It was the beginning

> of the end of something, he didn't know what except that he would not grieve. He would be humble and proud that he had been found worthy to be a part of it too or even just to see it too.

His not hating and fearing Lion is thus accepted, as through Ike's eyes, as some wondrous act of generosity and humility. But Boon, in a sense, although for different reasons, hasn't hated and feared Lion either; the differences are important. Ike has accepted the inevitability of the end. He would not grieve, didn't *have* to grieve, because removing himself from life's commitment, he could view the approaching event in his play-acting Hamlet-like aesthetic perspective, as the "last act on a set stage," and thus obviate the necessity to *live* the shattering event. Moreover, it would be Lion, that impersonal "natural force," that would do the slaying; it wouldn't be his fault, or even man's fault: unfeeling, implacable Nature, the not-man, would be responsible—the Lions and the degenerate, half-breed Boons. "Should have" becomes thus, in a larger view, "*ought* to have." He ought to have hated and feared Lion because Lion, who "inferred not only courage and all else that went to make up the will and desire to endure beyond all imaginable limits of flesh in order to overtake and slay," is as much a part of him—which he would repudiate—as pity, love, courage, and humility are. His not hating and fearing Lion was, after all, for the wrong reasons, unlike Boon's. He could not look at what he sensed was there in the Wilderness, at what the hunt and the Bear had really taught him—at what Kurtz and Marlow look at in the "Heart of Darkness"—and so he rationalized it out of consciousness by his "saintly" repudiation of the Lion in us, and by his acceptance of inevitability. So actually he *did* secretly and unwittingly hate and fear Lion! Boon, however, because he wasn't as smart as the others, *couldn't* hate and fear Lion, which requires a certain spiritual sophistication; he was, rather, powerfully drawn to him, and stood in awe of what his shocking power represented, because in his own inarticulate way he understood the "Wilderness" better than Isaac McCaslin did. For Faulkner, perhaps it is only the spiritually unsophisticated who have the capacity for "sainthood."

It is significant that Faulkner made a considerable change in the conclusion of "Lion"—where Boon sits under the tree hammering at his gun—before he used it to conclude the present story. This is how it reads in the former (it is important too that we recognize the boy as the narrator in this early version):

> Then I saw what Boon was hammering at. It was a section of his gun; drawing nearer, I saw the rest of it scattered in a dozen pieces about him on the ground where he sat, hunched over, hammering furiously at the part on his lap, his walnut face wild and urgent and streaming with sweat. He was living, as always, in the moment; nothing on earth—not Lion, not anything in the past—mattered to him except his helpless fury with his broken gun. He didn't stop; he didn't even look up to see who I was; he just shouted at me in a hoarse desperate voice.
>
> "Get out of here!" he said. "Don't touch them! They're mine!"

Here it is obvious he is trying to put his gun *together*—this uncomprehending, insensitive brute who had slain Old Ben in a fierce animal protectiveness or vengefulness, and had so hastened the end of something, a way of life, he could not understand. He represents, in this earlier romantic view of Faulkner's, the brute destructive force of an encroaching materialism. He is described, in the boy's words just quoted, as having no sense of the historic past, no traditions in the South, and as being unloving, without sentiment. The implications are pretty clear about the intention of the story. But it is not so clear in the present work, largely because so much of the first stories is brought forward intact into this one, but also because of the far more profound theme of the final working. To return, it seems much more likely, in the revised version, that Boon is attempting, in his childlike, hysterical way, to *destroy* the gun, which he had never felt quite at home with and couldn't use proficiently like the others, and which for him is identified with the passing of the wilderness he loved in his own way, and perhaps also with the deaths of Sam and Lion, over whom he grieves more than the others. Whereas Ike "accepts" these, relinquishing passion, renouncing *life,* in effect, Boon must go on living in furious protest against the terrible unjustness of the "inevitabilities," must live in the "wild blood boiling along the earth," as Addie did, because "doing goes along the earth," not in words and "poems." Boon, in the conclusion of the revised story, is protecting the squirrels:

> Then he saw Boon, sitting, his back against the trunk, his head bent, hammering furiously at something on his lap. What he hammered with was the barrel of his dismembered gun, what he hammered at was the breech of it. The rest of the gun lay scattered about him in a half-dozen pieces while he bent over the piece on his lap his scarlet and streaming walnut face, hammering the disjointed barrel against the gun-breech with the frantic abandon of a madman. He didn't even look up to see who it was. Still hammering, he merely shouted back at the boy in a hoarse strangled voice:

> "Get out of here! Don't touch them! Don't touch a one of them! They're mine!"

Unlike Ike, Boon, the half-witted and half-bred, grieves. God, in "The Bear," grieves too, in His commitment, and perhaps in this, Faulkner would say, is God's love.

Faulkner's meaning in "The Bear" is that if man would live, he must be prepared for the dying too; if he would love, he must also grieve for the spilled life that loving and living require. Simply to repudiate the spilling, to relinquish the grief, by relinquishing the passion, is to remove oneself from life, and from love, which, like the hunt, necessarily involves us in blood. There is no renunciation of life and the world which we can choose to make, and there can be no "acceptance" of the inevitabilities; we may only choose life. What we may renounce is only renunciation itself, and what we may attain to is not a regenerate state, sainthood, being, but our humanity. We gain Life by "losing" it only in the sense of having it *taken away,* of trying to live what is in the heart, and failing. Renunciation, "acceptance," is to surrender life to live in the "pretty rooms" of sonnets. ("and Isaac McCaslin, not yet Uncle Ike . . . living in one small cramped fireless rented room in a Jefferson boarding-house . . . with his kit of brand-new carpenter's tools . . . the shotgun McCaslin had given him with his name engraved in silver . . . and the bright tin coffee-pot")

We prefer to think the Boons of this world do the slaying, and our renunciations are our way of *allowing* them to. We construct our "pretty rooms" right in the Wilderness where we play at virtue and perform our purification rites, just as Major de Spain, Walter Ewell, McCaslin Edmonds and the rest did each year. The Negroes and their white masters, at the camp site, lived under an entirely different dispensation from the one which ordinarily prevailed in town, in real life, where they were virtually slaves. In the Big Woods they could play at being untainted, guiltless—there one felt free. The pursuit of Old Ben over the years is unsuccessful, not merely because he is a wily old beast, almost supernatural, but because they didn't want to kill him, and not killing him is the ritual of purification; by this, and by the altered relationship of Negro and white master, they could free themselves, for a while at least. Sam Fathers had begun, long before, to live at the camp site all year round, but when they approach him after he has collapsed, he murmurs, "Let me go, master," knowing that only death can really free him, that

he hasn't been free at all in the white man's lodge and woods. The Boons, with the hard button eyes—the insensitive, un-human destroyers and raveners, as we conceive them—are there at the last, almost by design, to shatter the pretty glass room of this dream of redemption: we create them and then sacrifice them in our condescensions and our renunciations in this last act of the ritual.

But as McCaslin says, we are rather "co-heirs with Boon" of Grandfather's legacy. So we are indubitably cursed, as McCaslin has it—cursed not to be able to live "poems," to dwell in the "pretty rooms" of the imagination, as Ike and the others attempt to do. Unlike the frieze of lovers on the Urn, and unlike what the Ode may contain, life in time requires of us a constant commitment in irremediable acts of living, an ineluctable involvement in our accursed fallen state.

But if this were all, we could not bear to read Faulkner. The work itself, moreover, would be, in a sense, self-denying: a work of art which repudiates art; a poem which denies poetry. The point, the difference, is that "The Bear" is no well-wrought urn testifying to, and promising, a healing and annealing power of the imagination, allowing us, by its blandishments, to escape, or renounce, the "heart high sorrowful and cloyed," the "burning forehead and a parching tongue," as in Keats, or mortal solitariness, human isolation, as in Donne—it doesn't allow us to renounce these for the timeless room of art. The wounding beauty of Faulkner makes us more *directly* aware of our human imperfection, or rather incompleteness, if the first term carries with it too much theological freight; it produces no mere *nostalgia* for Eden, but an anguish of the complex heart, a fructifying passion. The hurt is no sweet pining, no languishing upon the midnight with no pain, on the one hand; and instead of "pretty rooms," there are only the pounding chambers of the heart. We are not canonized in Faulkner, we are humanized; there is no beautifying, idealizing transfiguration, no "moral regeneration," either in the work or for the reader, but only an ideal of passion. Thus Faulkner does not deny beauty and poetry, although in a sense all tragedy does in part; he denies only the falsification of life which comes of living a poem. But this is not quite right either. There must *be* the "poems" man attempts to live, but there can be no deliberate renunciation and relinquishment of "doing," as Addie Bundren calls it, in order to escape into the "poem." And there can be no deliberate "acceptance" of life, which is also a kind of escape, a not-life, because it sees *too much*, understands too much, in its

aesthetic completeness which regrets everything, pardons everything in advance. The true seeing is only from a kind of sublime blindness, much like the blindness of Lear and Oedipus, in which no inevitability is "accepted" and in which the "poem" and life are taken away. Our "poems" give us the tragic *vulnerability,* the capacity for being hurt and defeated—such as Hemingway's characters show behind their bravado and tight-lipped defense against the world—without which there can be no "world," no life, no love, no tragic greatness. Faulkner's "beauty" thus arises in his truer imitation, in which man at his best is seen in passion.

IV

For the most part, the kind of criticism "The Bear," and Faulkner in general, has received is one whose strategy consists primarily in the discovery and elucidation of symbolic and mythic *analogues,* a criticism that is limited as an analytical instrument from the start. It reduces, right at its very inception, the organic, dramatic substance of a work to a mere *illustration* of a meaning which is already, because of our interpretation and reduction of the original symbolism, too logical, too far abstracted into statement. Instead of myth and symbol, we deal this way with parable and allegory of the simplest sort; instead of allowing the work its *own* mythic energies, its myth-creating power, we read it only as a kind of demonstration of what is, relatively speaking, really platitude. This is, in effect, interpretation twice removed from the work of art—actually, interpretation of interpretation—and in the process what we would wish to fasten our attention on really drops out of sight. Language itself is reduced to communicative counters and loses its expressive, meaning-creative function in this interpretation of interpretation, in the strict analogical criticism. Words, rhetorical and dramatic patterns, become mere clues to a puzzle. This is the true symbol-mongering. The important symbolism is the one the work creates by its own images; it is not the one upon which a work *may,* in fact, be modelled, as many indeed are, in which case the two levels of symbolism, the dramatic and the analogical, must be carefully distinguished, the two, of course, interanimating the total meaning of the work.

It is extraordinary that the literary and philosophical movement which seemed at one point to be destructive of all meaning and value should offer us now the subtle, fruitful meanings we need. Naturalism, by its insistence on the experience of the senses and on an existent "reality," by its rejection of a symbolic, idealistic, spiritual

"reality," has perhaps served us better than we know—certainly better than *it* knew. In a roundabout, ironic way, naturalism *restores* the symbolic imagination by destroying the analogical reading of experience and the world, just as Faulkner, in "The Bear," restores the possibility of sainthood by first destroying the platitude, the theology, of sainthood.

"The Bear" is an example of naturalism come of age. We distort the character and value of the movement when we limit the use of the term to the early deterministic and, to some, clinically brutalizing denials of traditional values. In this later phase of the movement, made possible only by the philosophical ground-clearing of the early destructive, negative phase, but actually an extension of the same unembarrassed scrutiny of the "natural" organism in its environment, there occurs something like a rediscovery of the psychological, "natural" grounds of myth and symbolism, which enables us to interpret anew the traditional symbols themselves. Naturalism ultimately reformulates in new symbols the same profound human meanings and requirements of the spirit that were embodied in our mythologies; these have, through the years, fossilized, in a manner of speaking, so that we no longer really find them viable. And frequently, through this fossilization, they grow from the descriptive sort of idealizing poetry they are in the beginning into systems, or theologies, which are no longer chiefly valuable for the "mysteries" they may contain, or *describe,* but for the techniques or programmes they *prescribe* for behavior and thought. The terms somehow remain the same in these "fossils" but the meanings they are able to support are altered considerably: they are reduced to platitudes.

The Christian symbolism and other mythic analogues we may discover in a work like "The Bear" thus really occur only as resonators, as it were, of the newly formed, and forming, meanings, and should be valued only dramatically, as making something else, indirectly, meaningful. Actually, in "The Bear," there is a denial of the traditional symbols as we, at least, have known and used them—that is, in their "theological" character. Faulkner's naturalism consists exactly in this. The naturalistic animus—so much easier to see in the earlier writers, where there was only bitterness, only disillusionment, and manifest more frequently than otherwise in the self-wounding mechanical determinisms which we have misread as "scientific detachment" and brutalism—this animus in Faulkner can be read in his rejection of our theology-techniques, in his telling us, in effect, as the other naturalists do, what the world and living really

are like. The coffee-pot grail is empty, contains no answers for the questing knight; the Christ-like carpenter's existence is empty too of meaning—false, actually. Indeed, Ike's whole "poem," as I have called it, corresponds, by implication, to man's day-dream of redemption. What Faulkner rejects, then, is the "theological" Christian symbols, the platitudinous symbolism and mythology of technique; and from being mere animus and self-contempt, self-scourging—better, as a *result* of this necessary initial temper—his "naturalism" ultimately recovers in passion perhaps the most fundamental meaning of Christian symbolism. It has been a most difficult recovery, especially for American writers, who have had to struggle with their Puritan inheritance for their artistic freedom and integrity. (In the Puritan psychology of faith, passion—as well as the Passion—was not recognized as being worth anything in itself. Where "sainthood" was an achievable human state, if the correct tests and techniques were applied, passion could only signify imperfection, failure, sin.) Most of the great American works give the same indications in their rhetoric and matter, one way or another, of having wrestled severely and, in the view of some of the artists, *heretically* for their freedom. ("I have written a wicked book, and feel spotless as the lamb.") Indeed, perhaps with the Reformation itself there began the "wicked books" which have had to recover our mythologies, over and over again, from theological technique.

So we must in no sense regard "The Bear" as an illustration or exemplification of conventional Christian values. Rather it questions these, denies them, but from this denial finally regains the forgotten human matrix out of which the symbols originally arose. It reembodies them in new symbols, which have little if anything to do with the "moral regeneration" of the old. And these latter have merely a dramatic function in the work as Ike's "meaning," Ike's "poem." They do not constitute the primary substantial symbolism of the work, which has to do, ultimately, with the human passion that exists in the unbridgeable chasm between the "truth" of the heart, of beauty, art, where man may be *all* that he might want to be, and the truth of the life we live in reality, where we are only what we are at any one committed moment of time. And this passion is valuable in itself, not for what we might obtain by it for ourselves, either in terms of enlightenment or actual ennoblement, in terms of a realizable redemption, but for the unselfconscious and unwitting humanity we attain to. "It is in defeat that we become Christian," another "naturalist" has one of his characters remark.

JOHN FREDERICK NIMS:

The Ivy and the Rune

i.

They whitened at the privilege
Of tiptoeing near death
To watch his fingers skeining
Hand over hand the breath

From lips like violets blanching—
This taught a thing or two.
Their palms were mute; their faces
The shape of what they knew:

Something of love, whose eyes burn
Gayer with failing breath;
Of flesh, a poor conductor
Of nearly all but death.

Knowing, they shrunk closer
(The deadened with the dead)
When night drained of color
Drowsy aster-head.

Through that wound, the world lay
In extremis too:
Meadows wailed their mossy blood;
Heaven bled its blue.

ii.

"This flesh, a toy of death;
His cat-and-mouse display.
Tomorrow's numbing fall
Tense in the air today.

"A crazy frame, soon down,"
I grieved. But Love said, "Look!"
And the flesh soared and such
Wonderment took;

The eye so fine a star,
The cheek such mains of light
That "O Love, you appear
Unendurably bright!"

The sky glowed softly, "I?"
And marvelling, "*I* appear?"
Then all midheaven shone: "I
But set a finger here."

iii.

The rose cajoling, "Now?"
The moon with shapely "Here?"
Persuaded. Waved away
The sheriff face of fear

Hardening, "Easy! *Here's*
Bad acreage of *Where.*
And *Now's* a fool mirage
Over coyote air."

"No, *Here's* the attractive moon."
(The sheriff whacked his star.)
"And *Now's* a garden dial
Where affluent roses are."

So once. No roses now.
No moon's ill-gotten glow.
Here shivers, "Far away?"
And *Now* weeps, "Long ago."

DOROTHY ROBERTS:

A Pattern

Severed from sociability the silence
Turns inward, sees the cold impersonal God
A stone, a still moon staying in a cloud,
And substitutes a pattern for the progress.

A pattern sits, a pattern says it's ready,
A pattern perambulates among its outposts
And colors all its doings with the fixed center:

I have a farm of all the routes I've taken
That so absorb their place upon a hill
That they are birdcalls each from its location,

That they are branches setting up a system
Going down and down into a root and upward
Into a sun, and all alive with harvest.

A pattern rests, a pattern reaches plenty,
A pattern holds its seasons in assembly
And finishes itself in constant freedom.

I have a farm, and if things come together
In such a way as dancing, then I'll never
Find a more personal array of God—

A flower bursting forth, a flower spreading,
A vast array of stars, and apples hanging,
And corn and earth and sun, a flower falling.

CHARLES B. TINKHAM:

The Seasons Following Death

I

winter days make a difference to her now
in the fifth-floor, bare-floored apartment
overlooking the city:
snow passes and repasses
(in an upwhirled flurry)
her window
and memories
are like those first
single flakes that go out like lights

on the dark stone
of the sill outside;
she sits
for moments watching summer die

II

or it is lonely
getting back at six o'clock
in spring
with just that twilight
which makes the corners of the rooms
as deep as wishes;
these are always days
when her girlhood asks for another chance,
when fresh leaves and the voices of the street
confuse her for a lonely moment
but then she cooks snap beans
and a pork chop for dinner

III

sometimes in dreams
beside the at-last fullness of summer
taunting her with richness
she runs in her light sleep away
till she finds her parents
speechless with their love,
and wakes
beside the bare wall
and the window made of summer

IV

autumn comes with a kick,
a good high wind rattling way down
in the wahoo bush beside the apartment,
where children play oblivious of bruises
got in fun,
and she throws back a ball
rolled far away;
there is laughter

GLAUCO CAMBON:

Dea Roma and Robert Lowell

What Rome means to a Catholic is obvious. But when the Catholic is a convert who rebelled against his Calvinist fathers, there is no telling the results. Robert Lowell has been the most uninhibited of the prodigal sons who inverted the route of the Mayflower: not so much a lost sheep going back to the fold as, rather, a lion. Maybe there is still a place for such an animal in our civilized world; when Lowell roared for peace, he may have been anachronistic, but he certainly was not a voice of the jungle or the zoo. In the Bible's heraldry there was a place for lions and eagles, not to speak of whales; and the apostles were given tongues of fire. A fiery tongue Lowell surely has, as readers of *Lord Weary's Castle* know; it burned with anger, but also with love, in "Exile's Return" and "The Dead in Europe." Rome herself, being not an inherited mansion, but a rediscovered cradle, drew forth fiery words from the former Puritan in "Dea Roma": "How many roads and sewers led to Rome."

A comparison with the later poem "Beyond the Alps," inspired by Pope Pius XII's 1950 proclamation of Mary's bodily assumption as a dogma, is readily suggested to the reader of Lowell's recent miscellany of verse and prose, *Life Studies*. Terse and taut as the earlier poem is, it sounds more public than this one, which evinces a richer perception, very subtly articulated. "Dea Roma" was epigrammatic to the point of impersonality: a summary recapitulation and judgment of Western history as a lost chance (from the Christian point of view):

> These sixteen centuries, Eternal City,
> That we have squandered since Maxentius fell . . .

Even more than the grandiose baroque conceit climaxing the poem—

> . . . your fisherman
> Walks on the waters of a draining Rome
> To bank his catch on the Celestial City.

what makes it "public" and "impersonal" is its being uttered by a collective "we" inclusive of all Christianity up to date and directly addressed to a half-personified Rome, statuesque no doubt but still

external, still "given" or "assumed" as an historical panorama rather than imaginatively appropriated. Though the rhetoric is firm, the tone seems a bit too loud, lacking in intimacy, as if the lines were spoken into a mouthpiece. That limits even the power of the effective verb "squandered," which no doubt conveys a soul-searching realization. Like Count Donatello in *The Marble Faun,* Lowell is looking at Rome from the Tarpeian Rock when he sees Satan "pacing up and down the world"; and it is not unfair to say that his vision shares with Hawthorne's romance a tone of Gothic melodrama.[1]

In "Beyond the Alps" the melodramatic element is completely subdued. The poem, to be sure, has to do with history and public figures like Pope Pius and Mussolini, but this history is not allowed to remain merely public. It is viewed from the inside, viewed and reviewed by an individual mind in a contingent situation—a pullman car in a northbound train crossing the Alps, an evening paper read before supper, a reminiscent mood that lets history arise from chronicles:

> Reading how even the Swiss had thrown the sponge
> in once again and Everest was still
> unscaled, I watched our Paris pullman lunge
> mooning across the fallow Alpine snow.
> *O bella Roma!* I saw our stewards go
> forward on tiptoe banging on their gongs.
> Life changed to landscape. Much against my will
> I left the City of God where it belongs.

A more personal approach to historical reality is hard to conceive. Instead of the generalizing "we," it is the repeated "I" that provides perspective and relation. It is a clear statement of responsibility, even though it has nothing emphatic about it, for it takes shape in a rather casual way and the chain of associations that is to become the poem starts from a disposition of idle curiosity (the act of reading a newspaper) implying at the same time openness and attention.

This is only one of the qualities that tend to make the poem antiphonal to the previous one. Here as there Rome gets its official appellation ("City of God" here; "Eternal City" in "Dea Roma"), but now it has an affectionate instead of an ironical ring because of the personal and matter-of-fact sentence it occurs in. Besides, one does not connect sewers with the City of God; only roads, and this

[1] See on this subject Mario Praz: *La crisi dell'eroe nel romanzo vittoriano,* Florence, 1952: (Appendix II: Roma e i Vittoriani, p. 423).

time it happens to be a railroad leading away from it ("much against my will"), not a concentric network of highways meeting there and abstractly regarded ("How many roads and sewers lead to Rome"). The speaker is on this very railroad, and the reader with him; the concreteness of the situation establishes existential perspective. In "Dea Roma" the poet was *addressing* the city, very broadly and indefinitely, and this implied a metaphoric *facing* it, a gesturing towards it, but without a sustaining occasion in experienced reality; the poem arose from another kind of (unmentioned) "reading" . . . it was, after all, more literary. The present poem, on the contrary, is very precisely placed in space and time, or, better, in a definite *movement* which fuses them into spacetime: a railway car getting farther and farther *away from* the much thought-about city. As a result, while "Dea Roma" dominated the earlier poem with an unfocused pervasiveness, "bella Roma" remains here a specific entity, confined in its proper space, geographically relativized by the fact of its being left behind, but at the same time unique and privileged: "I left the City of God where it belongs."[2] Rome becomes not merely "the Eternal City" or "the City of God," plausible as the rhetoric would be, but also a place of beauty and enjoyment verging on the profane, as well as the seat of troublesome politics and remote history. The actuality of present life in Rome is so colorfully intense that to leave it on a northbound route means to enter a silent, inert Nature (and not only because of the Alpine snows): "Life changed to landscape." The strategic placing of this sentence (right after the stewards' gongs) suggests a sudden magic, as if those gongs had precipitated the death-like crystallization. At the same time, they sound like a muffled echo of the Rome bells—what a poor ersatz! Enough, however, to turn the traveler's attention away from newspaper and snowy landscape towards the inner vistas of memory—Rome, of course, both in its permanent and ephemeral aspects as revealed during the recent visit. Thus while the train keeps taking him farther away, memory sets up a contrary movement of return. At this point one may reflect how the train situation is not accidental at all, or even a skilful convention to be used as setting or springboard for the "real" part of the poem, but rather a dense epitome of life itself as a ceaseless movement away from one's most cherished experiences, counter-

[2] The new posture indicates more confidence with the holy, on the part of the New England rebel, and this makes for a greater ease in diction. The sacred, the historical, and the quotidian can thus alternate or interlock nimbly; the crackling compactness of the typical Lowell line is now clearly making room for a suppler range of versification.

pointed by the salvaging effort of memory; indeed, this seems to be the only satisfactory approximation to the individual mind's perception of existence—a shifting perspective. To that extent, the setting of this poem *is* the whole poem: a trainride.

There are, of course, trainrides and trainrides. Ask Maupassant, Wolfe, and Wilder. Or Pasternak. This particular ride seems characterized by the fact that what goes on around the traveler is less important than what goes on in his mind, though what goes on in his mind encompasses a great deal of the world so many other men share. Like the train compartment which safely lodges him, his mind is anything but a windowless monad. And he gets to be so absorbed in this experience counterpointed by the constant rhythm of the speeding train, that it will come as a shock to arrive (at the end of the poem) in Paris—the practical sense and goal of the journey. That will be a new station in the journey of life, another direct confrontation with actuality, *il faudra tenter de vivre,* or more simply, there will be new challenges, new inducements. Seen in this context, the trainride is less than an objective correlative of life's whole arc, it is rather a privileged parenthesis, a temporary immunity from the hustle-and-bustle of everyday existence, the kind of franchise that, along with occasional boredom for the "blear-eyed ego," will afford a precious opportunity for unimpeded thought. This way the poem gains new focus, without losing the larger implication mentioned before, for the concept of *shifting perspective* enables the trainride situation to function both ways without esthetic contradiction. One relevant consequence of the second implication is the tone of relative detachment that underscores the traveler's meditation on human history as unfolded and unfolding in Rome:

> There the skirt-mad Mussolini unfurled
> the eagle of Caesar. He was one of us
> only, pure prose. I envy the conspicuous
> waste of our grandparents on their grand tours—
> long-haired Victorian sages accepted the universe,
> while breezing on their trust funds through the world.

The movement of thought is still rambling, undramatic, and indeed *undramatizing:* see how the troubling episode of Mussolini is wittily judged by the juxtaposition of "skirt-mad" and "unfurled," then quickly dismissed with a wise, even indulgent appraisal that reabsorbs him into the bourgeois world he wanted to shock and change. From his failure to revive the buried past of the Caesars we are taken

back to the leisurely stance of the Victorian grandparents—itself, however, vanished from our world: there was a place for this, too, in beautiful, ancient, indestructible Rome. The interval of tyranny is bracketed as a futile episode; Rome survived Mussolini, as so many other rulers, upstarts or invaders. Rome's weapon is, as every outsider knows, an invincible indifference to anything but life itself; when Fascism promulgated as its motto the slang phrase *"me ne frego"* ("I don't give a damn"), it played into the hands of an uncommitted Roman majority, who had long been using that very phrase with a totally anti-heroic meaning, and were therefore ready to weather this further trouble. The Eternal City knows the value of time as passive endurance. . . .

But Rome is also, and for Lowell in a very real sense, the City of God. Thus, if the power and glory of empire are untransferable to present-day politics without serious penalty from archeology, and if the antidote of indifference was too passive to check Mussolini's ill-fated attempt in that direction, even though it did finally prevail when he had played out his hand, indifference will not surround that other kind of pageantry the Pope so well commands. When the musing traveler's mind revisits the scene of Piazza San Pietro crowded with the acclaiming thousands at the announcement of the new dogma of Mary's bodily assumption, the tone becomes more earnest, the pace more driving, and the argument more stably focused. At the same time, the initially reiterated "I" disappears from the page to mark the turn for a more objectively sustained vision; ideas are no longer rambling or private, but gathered to a dramatic monologue which transcends its individual utterer. The traveler is totally absorbed in the object of his meditation and in the momentous questions arising from it; an exclamatory clause, followed by two interrogative ones, introduces a new animation in the formerly low-pitched discourse (the very duration of pauses now shortens.) The exclamation itself, which naturally arises as a comment in the lonely traveler's mind, is offered and placed in such a way as to make it a possible part of the listening Pope's inner monologue:

> When the Vatican made Mary's Assumption dogma,
> the crowds at San Pietro screamed *Papa.*
> The Holy Father dropped his shaving glass,
> and listened. His electric razor purred,
> his pet canary chirped on his left hand.
> The lights of science couldn't hold a candle

> to Mary risen—at one miraculous stroke,
> angel-wing'd, gorgeous as a jungle bird!
> But who believed this? Who could understand?

Unlike Mussolini, obviously Pope Pius XII, the Church and its dogma are not "pure prose." Lowell takes the bold position that Mussolini failed, both politically and morally, through a dearth, not an excess, of imagination. His fateful prosiness, one may gather from the poem, insisted on digging up an irrecoverable past from the ruins of the Forum because it wanted only the *literalness* of empire, the mere materiality of history: the hopelessly dead part of Rome. The Pope, instead, tried not to repeat lost history, to materialize the phantom of power, but to *transcend* history by developing its own inner thrust towards the everlasting. To proclaim Mary risen to Heaven in body and soul is to enrich the treasury of truth (for a Catholic) by an act of the purest theological imagination, soaring "as a jungle bird" that has no use for heavy, shattered ruins. It is the Rome of faith, not the Rome of power-politics, that keeps alive. The Ariel dream of the Church is truer than the dream of Caesar, or of his poor modern counterparts. Yet the imaginative truth of theology may have little chance in a world of prose. Mussolini was not its most dangerous adversary. *We* are, with our watered-down Christianity: "He was one of us / only, pure prose." For we survive him in our anonymity and mediocrity. The momentous questions—"But who believed this? Who could understand?"—touch us all, and contain an indictment—that is, if we read the poem with its author's Catholic disposition; if we cannot share it, at least in a temporary suspension of disbelief, then the poem will be available to us in another way only: as a dramatization of the Church's pathetic inability to cope with the actualities of modern life. Even so, the Pope retains his dramatic focus as a hero of the imagination, who defied our earthbound age with a new statement of the Patristic *credo, quia absurdum*. It would seem to be the only way to shake the modern mind out of its science-idolatry. Bourgeois complacency is as literal-minded as political tyranny, indeed it is the latter's seedbed. Uncompromising theology asks us to share analogically in Mary's Assumption by rising above our "scientific" certainties. Unless we wholeheartedly accept the irruption of miracle, we shall be doomed to inhabit a dried-up world of predictable realities, as G. K. Chesterton said in his anti-Spencerian plea for *orthodoxy*.

Thus the central dilemma of modern man is brought to focus by

the delightfully intimate picture of aristocratic Pope Pius XII listening to the vocal crowd with the electric razor in his right hand and his pet canary chirping on the other. The touches of humor which make this portrait very human (that shaving glass dropped in surprise, for instance) enhance rather than obliterate the significance of the two tactfully presented objects. One cannot miss the thematic development of the razor into "the lights of science" and of the canary into Mary "angel-wing'd, gorgeous as a jungle bird." Their dilemmatic antithesis is clinched by their position in the Pope's hands: science at right, faith at left. The alternative is not grasped by the majority of people ("But who *believed* this? Who could *understand?"*), or if it is, then only in a distorted way. The Pope himself has pointed a way out of the dilemma by accepting science and technology in their limited sphere of usefulness: the razor purrs, like a contented cat that will not jump at the airy bird; the purring and the chirping harmonize, and there is no need to tell which of the two is the voice of free, high-pitched joy. Being a poet, Lowell has mirrored in the tension of science and religion that other vital issue of "prose" (in the untechnical sense of the word) and poetry, or, more precisely, of deadening matter-of-factness and liberating imagination. This dimension of the poem will certainly appeal to those readers who cannot identify the Catholic dogma with absolute truth. Commitment does not mean clerical or anticlerical fanaticism, and for this reason Robert Lowell and Ignazio Silone, speaking from opposite sides of the fence, can share a responsive audience.

The clamoring crowd outside the Vatican, in Piazza San Pietro, may be responsive, but is it *responsible* as well? The impasse of contemporary history demands both the unrestrained *élan* of belief and the discriminating honesty of intellect. One must *believe* and *understand,* and that crowd, if sincere, is hardly dependable to that cultivated extent. Its enthusiasm rings true, but too many of its members weight down the intangible vision of Christianity into the quagmire of superstition, and a more noxious kind of superstition tempts them from another quarter:

> Pilgrims still kissed Saint Peter's brazen sandal.
> The Duce's lynched, bare, booted skull still spoke.

People who do not properly *believe* or properly *understand* fall prey to obscurantist myths, instead of receiving the light of the Church in its intended purity (which for Lowell coincides with the purity

of imagination) and resisting the seduction of regressive, deadly forces in political life (the Duce's skull and its Neo-fascist worshipers.) At this point the traveler's thoughts take a turn for the catastrophic. If saintly Pius' pure vision fails to penetrate, elevate and transform the naïve crowd (not only the Roman crowd assembled that day of 1950 in Piazza San Pietro, but all of us Westerners, by implication) then mankind will succumb to the powers of death, and instead of bestowing His Grace upon it, God will give it a *"coup de grâce"*:

> God herded his people to the *coup de grâce*—
> the costumed Switzers sloped their pikes to push,
> O Pius, through the monstrous human crush. . . .

The Pope's harmless Swiss guards, in the apocalyptic nightmare, are transmogrified into non-picturesque executioners—a skull is grinning, the crowd is dehumanized, as in certain totalitarian ideologies, into a "monstrous human crush" . . . We have been given our chance, after all, and a Final Judgment is in order. World War II was a preview.

The pause that follows this dramatic climax corresponds to a night's sleep—the train has left Rome in the morning, and will get to Paris the following morning. In the first light of dawn the traveler wakes up to a changed landscape; the Alps have been left behind in their turn, as Rome and Italy before them, and blear-eyed as he is he looks back at this other lost height. The excruciating reflection of the previous afternoon and evening has been too much for him, and the weariness of the trip begins to tell:

> Our mountain-climbing train had come to earth.
> Tired of the querulous hush hush of the wheels,
> the blear-eyed ego kicking in my berth
> lay still, and saw Apollo plant his heels
> on terra firma through the morning's thigh . . .
> each backward, wasted Alp, a Parthenon,
> fire-branded socket of the Cyclops' eye.
> There were no tickets for that altitude
> once held by Hellas, when the Goddess stood,
> prince, pope, philosopher and golden bough,
> pure mind and murder at the scything prow—
> Minerva, the miscarriage of the brain.

Characteristically, now that the writer reverts to his own self after the *un-selfish* (and yet personally concerning) thoughts of Rome and the Pope, he cannot reinstate the confident "I" of the opening,

but sees himself as a puny, dissociated, restive object ("blear-eyed ego") which nevertheless responds to the revelation of sunrise. The "descent to earth" is anticlimax to the previous "mountain-climbing" and, more profoundly, to the soaring idea of Mary's Assumption which mankind fails to grasp. Here a seemingly casual detail of the beginning comes into focus and helps to close the circuit of images: Mount Everest has defeated the Swiss climbers and remains unscaled, just like the spiritual heights Pius showed to his contemporaries. Ours is not a time for ascensions.

The train itself, although attaining a certain altitude, has to stop short of the highest; it is an earthbound contrivance of human technology, and has "no tickets for that altitude / once held by Hellas." The Christian solution was preceded by the Greek one, equal in purity and opposite in spirit: instead of Christ the Redeemer, Apollo (whom our traveler recognizes briefly in the rising sun), and in the place of motherly Mary, the cold light of Minerva, an aloof goddess, "Pure *m*ind and *m*urder . . . / *M*inerva, the *m*iscarriage of the brain."[3]

The alliterations italicized by the writer of the present essay embody Lowell's reaction to "the glory that was Greece": he admires, but has no use for, a civilization that centered on abstract mind, inhuman like the inviolate Alps now in the background of the poem's journey. Like Minerva, Mary is a heavenly Virgin, but, unlike her, she is also a mother; there can be no question of "miscarriage" in the case of Christ's mother. To classical Greece, Minerva was "prince, pope, philosopher and golden bough"; that is, she subsumed all public and private values under the category of pure speculation, foreign to charity and Incarnation. The thought of Greek divinity is occasioned by the sight of the snowy Alps gradually receding beyond the traveler's ken; and Minerva, as a "miscarriage of the brain," assures him that the dominion of pure science has

[3] Lowell is referring to the myth of Pallas Athena's sudden virgin birth from Jupiter's head, and he capitalizes on that to brand Hellenic culture as inhumanly intellectualistic. But for the fact that this is presented as the view of the traveler in the poem, there would be quite a few objections to such a partisan distortion of Greek civilization. Socrates is far from a "miscarriage of the brain," indeed he knew something of maieutic. Yet the image, as it arises in the poem and in the particular perspective of the traveler looking back upon the sunlit Alps, does have a deep force of its own, the more so as Lowell has subtly related it to both our "science" and our Christian myth. A possible implication at one remove from the center of meaning might be that Minerva, as cold and cruel goddess of the mind and as abortive value imagistically connected with the mountain snow in the poem, reminds him of the ancestral Calvinism against which he revolted. Switzerland does play a part in the poem. . . .

been tried out and found wanting long before Pope Pius held that purring razor to his ascetic cheek. So, after all, the introduction of Greek vistas evoked by the snow of Switzerland is just another variation on the central theme as evidenced in Rome: pure reason (in Greece, without technology) versus the purity of faith. The Christian idea still stands.

After a page-break which lets that realization sink in, we reach the poem's concluding couplet:

> Now Paris, our black classic, breaking up
> like killer kings on an Etruscan cup.

In the train's abrupt stop in Paris we experience a further regression to what Lowell calls "black classic," a disintegrating civilization ("breaking up") that joins the luscious, corrupt cruelty of a pre-Hellenic culture, the Etruscan. To go away from Rome is to revert to less and less human stages of our Western history; Paris's formal classicism is not Rome's (or Athens'), and it is now breaking down into primitivistic art. "Black classic" arouses an echo of "black magic," but it probably has more directly to do with the city's Northern climate and industrial suburbs. If still unrealized, it is Rome's Christian appeal that holds the greatest promise for our bemused traveler. It is a plea for completeness versus one-sidedness, for the wholeness of imagination and reason, science and faith. It protects our minds from the death of wonder, and keeps a breathable atmosphere available.

This is why, in the beautiful poem "For George Santayana" (also in *Life Studies*), Lowell gently polemizes with the expatriate sage who died in Rome and chooses to consider him a "Catholic infidel, / stray spirit, who'd found / the Church too good to be believed" rather than a champion of Hellenic Minerva. Santayana now lies "outside the consecrated ground," typical of the honest modern mind that tries to *understand,* if not to *believe;* and the elegant stylist who thought he saw through "animal faith" becomes, to his moved posthumous interlocutor, another Brunetto Latini. One remembers the affection Dante shows to his dead master when he meets him in *Inferno* XV; and it is the last tercet of this Canto that Lowell inserts here in translation. How appropriate. While doing justice to Santayana's moral and intellectual stature, Lowell (who has a fair share of Dante's temper and faith, along with some of his genius) establishes his own position in unmistakable terms. This is the focus of the poem, which therefore belongs with "Beyond the Alps" and not on

mere grounds of locale. There are many details that would reward specific analysis, such as the playful allusion to the Capitol geese in connection with the solicitous nuns who took care of the unbelieving exile, or the description of his Hellenizing philosophy as a vain attempt to change "those fleeting virgins into friendly laurel trees / at *Santo Stefano Rotondo*" (but of course Daphne this time refused even metamorphosis), or the weird picture of the philosopher's prying mind in terms of his magnifying glass—an arena where sand whirls and lions are mysteriously tamed. But the important thing is the way in which this poem, like its kindred pieces, manages to focus a central problem of our time. For Dea Roma is the embodiment of history, and history is very much with us now that we are trying to overcome its drawbacks in reasserting our heritage.

CAROLYN STOLOFF:

Cycle

After falling in dreams
through the spaces of their teeth,
from the red depths,
the young girls come
climbing.

They come to gather blossoms.
They smile, until a branch
breaks under their weight.
Falling like leaves, the ladies
come from

behind the green curtain.
Snow melts to blue
pools. Baring their teeth
they come to gather twigs
around the eyes.

OLIVER RICE:

Poem

Because they said he was a sickly child and evil-tempered
the fiddles, muted, announced a poignant figure
approaching the first tee in a scarf and blazer, alone
because he wet Aunt Ida's featherbed
in the middle of the night, getting everyone up
squinting, shifting his stance
with studied elaborations a fourth above and a fourth below
because the first day of scrimmage he knew he was a coward
the first trumpet introducing, on the off beat, a contrapuntal subject
ragged and perverse
in the rough beyond the marker
and slashed Rebecca's tire
and told the dirty story
with bravado interplay between the sax and the traps
a jazzy approach
although the green expanse of the Judge's lawn
inspired the first communion
the tragic sense, the noble flight
hooking nicely around the dogleg
falling abruptly away as the cellos adroitly restate the opening
compressed and inverted
misgiven and unspeakable
an uphill lie
although he was a virgin until then
the first trombone, suave, compulsive, exploring the counter theme
and missed the Dean's list only once
the spring he went on the bum
a sullen, mechanistic scherzo emerging, poco a poco
among the tubas, the piccolos, gongs and blocks
grimly
bogey by bogey
he saw, the second year in Cleveland, how it would go
crescendo, accelerando
because he couldn't tell her
and slept on the couch

the brasses massing against the strings
a magnificent tutti
off the toe of the brassie
although he taught the boys to pray
compelled by a notion of depravity
propelled to a stunning sforzando
although they kept no liquor in the house
the solo trumpet thrust into crisis
an incredibly ingenious, triumphant cadenza
magniloquent, vindictive
because the alumni news omitted his name
subsiding at last
to a masterful chorale with the strings
sagacious, felicitous
utterly assonant
an awesome score
tossing the clubs in the trunk
because, any more, he skipped the editorials
although he remembered names and voted
and watched his weight.

ARMAND SCHWERNER:

Rites of Passage

My fear is moved in me. If the ocean
You inhabit buoys your craft, why, tell me
Tell me how; if triremes, potions
Can be salvaged, mariners hauled with nets
And quickened from fathoms I had no such notions

But those I learned from you, that *an anchor retrieves,*
You said, *oceanic pearls alight*
Like tears, votive fragments won from the dreams' eaves
In a child's galley. Wakefield, Chester, Coventry,
York, babyhood of drama, leaves

Of supple tree when Christ was young and Everyman asleep
And playing what they played, the actors pure
Or solemn: o lambent gothic towns, a ship,
Like you, is a direction with a mask on its prow
To cozen death, doubt, to loose the grip.

Is it terror drives a ship? Which voice
Or tang of siren spice whips our sea men on?
"I'm really nice, I really love . . . ," hoarse
Immolation in the hedge. "Tomorrow will be
Better": the nickels and dimes of a cutpurse

Sown from other sailors' pillage as death
Copies the dead; America was promises.
Learn, you said, *learn a sea man's breath*
For the rites of passage; dance, you said, *mime*
The body's inward Grace and set your teeth

On edge to find your proper salvage. Without
A dream is no waking; without waking, turn in
Your dredge, turn your metaphors to shout.
Everyman, born of mask, less
Than man, made his rounds and winnowed out,

Like you, Good Deeds and Knowledge; abstractions lie
Perhaps or bore, despair remains to warm us:
The way unknown is the way of an anchor's try,
The drama student's psalter. Sailors must
Murder on their way.
My teacher my love you'll die.

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